BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The First Civilized American

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PHILLIPS RUSSELL

Profusely Illustrated

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

The First Civilized American

Prefatory Catechism

Who was the first civilized American?
Benjamin Franklin.

Why do you call him so?
Because at an American period eminent for narrowness, superstition, and bleak beliefs he was mirthful, generous, open-minded, learned, tolerant, and humor-loving. Because he was the first American man of the world in the sense that he was the first American world-man.

What was his age as compared with that of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson?
He was a mature man with a record of achievement when they were still swaddled infants. He was 26 years older than Washington, 30 years older than Adams, and 37 years older than Jefferson.

What was Franklin's most marked characteristic?
A gusto for living.

What was his avowed aim?
To "do good" and live a satisfying life.

Did he succeed?
Abundantly.

Were there any inconsistencies in his career?
Many.

Can you specify?
He disregarded his own maxims as uttered by "Poor Richard" and lamentably failed to observe the principles set up in his own "Art of Virtue."

Was Franklin a good man?

Most of his associates, including various clergymen, so regarded him; others deemed him sinful.

Where and when was he born?

Boston, 1706, old style.

Where and when did he die?

Philadelphia, 1790, at the age of 84.

Who were his parents?

Josiah Franklin, an immigrant dissenter from the doctrines of the Established Church in England, and Abiah Folger, daughter of one of New England's first settlers.

In what terms did Benjamin Franklin refer to his parents after their death?

On the marble he placed over their grave in Boston his father was described as "a pious and prudent man," his mother as "a discreet and virtuous woman."

To what age did they live?

His father died at 89, his mother at 85.

Where did the Franklin family originate?

Records pertaining to it have been traced back to 1555, in the village of Ecton, or Eton, Northamptonshire, England.

Are there any facts of interest relating to Benjamin Franklin's forebears?

On his father's side the eldest sons were bred as smiths for several generations back. Benjamin's paternal great-grandfather was once imprisoned a year and a day "on suspicion of his being the author of some poetry that touched

the character of some great man."[1] His maternal grandfather wrote in 1675 some "home-spun verse" favoring liberty of conscience and exhorting the authorities to repeal the laws against Baptists, Quakers, and other persecuted sects. Franklin's paternal grandfather, Thomas, was a "scrivener," public-spirited citizen, and "a chief mover for the county or town of Northampton."[2]

What was Josiah Franklin's trade?

In England he was a dyer, but in America he became a tallow chandler and soap boiler.

Had Josiah Franklin other children besides Benjamin?

Yes, he was the father, by two wives, of seventeen children, thirteen of whom survived.

What was peculiar about Benjamin's birth in relation to preceding generations?

He was the youngest son of the youngest son for five generations.

Had he any schooling?

For two years. He was placed in a grammar school at the age of 8, and later a school for writing and arithmetic.

Was he an apt pupil?

Yes, in the grammar school he soon rose from the middle to the head of his class.

What was his chief weakness?

He failed in arithmetic.

What occupation was chosen for him?

As the tithe of his father's sons, he was intended for the ministry.

[1] Letter from Josiah Franklin to his "loving son," Benjamin, 1739.

[2] Autobiography.

How long after leaving school did he work for his father?

Two years.

What happened then?

At the age of 12, he was apprenticed to his brother James to learn the printing business.

Chapter I

The Moulding of a Young Chandler

I

THE evidence is that Benjamin Franklin, born in 1706, first "came alive," as the saying is, about the year 1718. Let us consider, then, his small and somewhat pudgy person at the age of twelve.

From his parents, whom he never knew "to have any sickness but that of which they dy'd,"[1] he has inherited a healthy and vigorous body and under their tutelage has had his attention turned to what is "good, just and prudent in the conduct of life." At the family table, where the food is regarded as secondary, he has listened to the discussions of ingenious and useful topics by the sensible friends and neighbors whom his father, "pious and prudent man," has invited for the edification of his multitudinous children.

The first incident which we know of concerning the canny influence of his relatives on the childish Franklin occurred when he was seven years old. Friends had given him some coppers, with which he sought a toy shop. There he was charmed with a whistle. He gave all his money for it. When the disturbance he created at home with the whistle led to a discovery of the price he had paid for it, his relatives made great fun of him, and told him he had paid four times what it was worth. They at the same time pointed out to him the good things he might have bought with the rest of the money. It is on record that little Ben "cried with vexation." He then and there resolved never again

[1] Autobiography.

to "give too much for the whistle," as he afterwards related to his charming Parisian friend, Madame Brillon, in the famous essay entitled "The Whistle."

On walks with his father, Franklin has been coached to watch joiners, bricklayers, turners, braziers and other artificers, at their work. This has stimulated in him a desire to learn the use of tools, an accomplishment which later enabled him to do little jobs about his own home without depending on dilatory workmen, and what was more important — to use his own words — "to construct little machines for my experiments, *while the intention of making the experiment was fresh and warm in my mind.*"[2] He has cut candle wicks, filled the moulds, tended the chandler's shop, run errands, and otherwise assisted that father of whom he stands in awe and whom he obeys with filial piety. But despite his exacting duties, little Benjamin has found time to play. He has gone a-fishing for minnows, learned to swim well, and has discovered his first labor-saving device by using the pulling power of a kite to draw himself across a pond. He has also exhibited that capacity for resourceful leadership which, as might have been expected, has manifested itself in an escapade.

One day Benjamin joins his fellows on a fishing expedition to a mill pond bounded by a marsh. They cannot fish in any comfort because of the quagmire which bogs their feet. The other boys make the best of the situation. Not so Benjamin. He has been taught that eyes are made to observe with. He looks around. Nearby some house builders have left a heap of stones. Eagerly he calls to his companions. He points. They do not understand.

"These will keep our feet dry," he explains.

"They'll only sink in the mud," they object.

"No, don't you see? We'll build a wharf with them."

[2] Autobiography.

"How?"

"Fetch the stones. I'll show you."

Benjamin, you see, has observed stone-masons at their work. He knows, and knows he knows. Soon the little wharf is built. The minnow-fishermen stand upon it comfortably, with dry feet. They congratulate themselves on their cleverness. Benjamin does not resent their failure to give him the credit; he has done no more than is to be expected from a loyal gang member; but in his heart there stirs a quick, warming pride. His first job of construction is a success; he feels a germ of the grown man's joy in the work of his hands.

And do their elders, discovering this boyish achievement, praise the young builders for their energy, vision and initiative? No, the history of Elder vs. Younger incessantly repeats itself. The workmen, returning the next day, call them downright nuisances, and the fathers of the ingenious fishermen, having received complaints and instituted a grave inquiry, summon the small masons into a dark corner, question them, lecture them, and finally, declaring no doubt that this hurts them more than their sons, birch them. Benjamin is one of the victims thus "corrected."

Probably this is one of the first incidents which serves to disillusion the youthful Franklin as to the justice and wisdom residing in the parental mind. Seeing his father as, after all, inconsistent and therefore merely human, he begins to tug at the ligatures which bind him to the overcrowded home and exacting shop. Gradually he asserts his individuality. Though still a young bird, he peeps over the edge of the nest. He day-dreams of the pulsing world beyond the rim of humdrum little Boston. He openly displays his dislike of his father's trade. He refuses to consider the clergyman's habit in which his father had hoped one day to see him clothed. One day he causes the elder

Franklin to stand aghast by announcing that he means to resort to that avenue of escape desired at some stage by all vigorous and restless boys — the sea.

Father and son face each other, the elder "well set, very strong;"[3] the son no less so. But the father is a little bowed from much work and small pay; his eyes have the liquid sorrowing look of the idealist and religious devotee; he is bewildered by the sudden obstinacy of this his youngest, and up to now, his most obedient son.

Little Benjamin stands before him not truculently, but firmly. His thin little lips, the lower projecting slightly, are pressed together. His head is thrown back, revealing his high, rounded forehead, his oval but long and powerful chin in which there is a marked cleft. His is not an attractive face, but it is relieved from commonplaceness by a gleam of drollery in the slightly protruding eyes rolling under heavy, drooping lids.

The struggle of wills results in victory for neither side. Benjamin fails to obtain consent to go to sea,[4] but his father, on his side, fails to obtain the son's adherence either to the chandler's shop or the Church. Benjamin is ordered to bed, while Josiah, sorrowing, goes in to consult Abiah and conspire with her, in the manner of parents of that time, to defeat the desires of their son's heart.

Josiah emerges from the conference with a new idea. His brother, Benjamin, for whom the little Franklin is named, has a son named Samuel, who, after learning the cutler's trade in London, has set himself up in Boston. To Samuel Josiah takes the younger Benjamin and leaves the lad in the cutler's shop "on liking." But Samuel, though

[3] Autobiography.

[4] It is a curious fact that Franklin's son partly succeeded where his father failed. When a small boy, he ran away from home and got on board a privateer, whence he was fetched home by his, let us hope, remembering father.

PORTRAIT OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AT THE AGE OF 53.
PAINTED IN LONDON IN 1759 BY BENJAMIN WILSON

RETURNED TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES
BY EARL GREY IN 1906.

a relative, is a business man first. He intimates that he does not, for his health's sake alone, teach boys the cutler's trade, and that he expects a fee. That word, to the father of seventeen children, is annoying. Josiah withdraws Benjamin, his son, from the house of Samuel.

Now what to do?

A moment critical in the life of the rebellious and ambitious young Franklin has arrived. His career is at a turning point. But before we discover what direction it takes, let us relate Benjamin, small though he is, to the large affairs of the world. What are the great currents which, rising mysteriously and whirling off into unknown spaces, may affect the destinies of this little chip afloat on a dark ocean?

II

In England Queen Anne is the reigning monarch. In 1706, the very year of Franklin's birth, Daniel Defoe, after a fulsome address to the queen, published in London his *Juno Divino*. It bore this strange and significant dedication:

"To the most Serene, most Invincible, and most Illustrious Lady,

"REASON,

"First Monarch of the World, Empress of the East, West, North and South; Hereditary Director of Mankind; Guide of the Passions; Lady of the Vast Continent of Human Understanding; Mistress of all the Islands of Science; Governess of the Fifteen Provinces of Speech; Image of, and Ambassador Extraordinary from, the Maker of all Things; the Almighty's Representative and Resident in the Souls of Men; and one of Queen Nature's Most Honourable Privy Council."

Thus was sounded the "keynote" of the Eighteenth Century, when it was firmly believed that henceforth Reason was to govern all human motions. Men might still flatter monarchs with their lips, but in their hearts they were already questioning the divine right of kings.

In the latter part of the preceding century, John Locke had been in the habit of meeting five or six friends informally to discuss certain philosophical questions. As a result of these discussions he set himself the task of sketching the "limits of human understanding." He naïvely thought he could do it on a single sheet of paper. But the limits in question proved to be so elastic that one sheet led to another, and finally there emerged the then monumental *Essay on Human Understanding*, issued sixteen years before Franklin's birth and read by young Ben sixteen years afterward. By this and other works Locke established himself as the philosopher of civil and religious liberty, the foe of abstract speculation, and the upholder of the rights of reason and of experimental verification in the quest after the retreating thing called truth.

Other odd people, things and events were being born into the world, including Dr. Samuel Johnson of London. Almost at the same time that young Franklin was facing his father in a struggle of wills, a lad in France, who was later to clasp hands with Franklin under dramatic circumstances, was skirmishing with his own parent in a similar combat. This was young Voltaire, who was passionately resisting his father's decision to send him into the law. While Franklin was still cutting candle wicks, Voltaire, twelve years the elder, was serving a sentence in the Bastille for writings objectionable to the authorities of his time and country. Six years later than Franklin were born two other heretical men of the period — Jean Jacques Rousseau, whose *Contrat Social* was to lay down the disturbing principle that all gov-

ernment must be based on the consent of the governed; and Frederick the Great, of Prussia, who accepted and taught the new theory that "a king is the first servant of the people." New forces, uncomfortable theories, and undreamed of discoveries were making themselves felt. Newton had already established a novel science of theoretical mechanics; Watt was shortly to discover the steam engine; Spinoza had written a new philosophy in Holland, and the skeptical writings of Lord Shaftesbury and Anthony Collins were finding an ever-widening circle of readers. It was a day of questionings and dim doubts. Men felt an uneasiness of the spirit without knowing its origin, for the flowers of authoritarian evil had not yet bloomed. Long afterwards the author of *The Education of Henry Adams* wrote concerning this century, of which Franklin saw nearly the whole: "Evidently a new variety of mind had appeared . . . Not one considerable man of science dared face the stream of thought; and the whole number of those who acted, like Franklin, as electric conductors of the new forces from nature to man, down to the year 1800, did not exceed a few score, confined to a few towns in Western Europe. Asia refused to be touched by the stream, and America, except for Franklin, stood outside."

Let us see what Henry Adams, keen-witted descendant of that ponderous John Adams whose relations with Franklin at a later period shall be described hereafter, meant by saying "America stood outside."

At the time when the infant Franklin was uttering his first cry, the most conspicuous writer in the American colonies was the Rev. Cotton Mather. While teachers in other lands were urging men to listen to the voice of reason, he was calling on the faithful to beware of witches. Only a few years before Franklin's birth, the mischief set afoot by eight silly and illiterate Massachusetts girls, who used

to meet and giggle hysterically in the dark of the moon, had reached a maniacal climax in the Salem witch persecutions of 1692. Cotton's father, Increase Mather, and Solomon Stoddart were meantime issuing pamphlets of quarrelsome theology dealing with such questions as these:

"Is it lawful to wear long hair?"

"At what time of evening does the Sabbath begin?"

"Can baptized persons destitute of religion come to the table of the Lord?"

The ten American colonies, containing less than half a million inhabitants all told, were perched timidly on the rim of the Atlantic Ocean, the shore of which was the nearest thing to England. Loosely strung settlements hung southward from Boston, divided from each other by vast tracts of lonely land traversed at intervals by dim trails and gully-washed roads. Boston, with 10,000 inhabitants, regarded itself as a bustling city, but near the Old South Church still stood the village pillory and stocks. Probably nowhere in New England did men or women go to bed at night with minds at ease, for the shadows cast by the Indian-haunted forests on sparsely-yielding fields were deepened by that which overhung the spirits of the people. The Mathers and their kind, disagreeing with St. John, taught by precept and example that God was Fear. Fears huddled in the corners of human hearts, and toil and uneasiness imparted that grimness to the human countenance which is pathetically evident in early American portraits.

III

This is the world with which the hardy little Franklin is about to come to grips. In muscle and sinew he is, as has been explained, well equipped. But what is the furniture of his young mind? With what ideas is his immature brain

garnished? From the first he has been an avid reader, gluttonous for knowledge. One by one he has pulled out the books in his father's meagre library. He seeks bread for his imagination, but receives the stone of polemic theology. He afterwards wrote feelingly of his regret that "more proper books" had not fallen in his way, much as a staid adult of today might wish that he had, in his inquisitive youth, wasted less time on dime novels.

Franklin's first purchased book was Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, that doleful volume which has probably given nightmares to more children than any other ever written. Franklin, however, says he was pleased with it, owing to its brisk plot and graphic dialogue. It moved him to make a collection of Bunyan's works. These, however, he was soon willing to part with; he sold them and replaced them with R. Burton's *Historical Collections*, forty or fifty small chap-books, of which Dr. Johnson once remarked, "They seem very proper to allure backward readers." Then came Plutarch's *Lives*. These impressed him more. He read in them abundantly. Over half a century later he wrote, "I still think that time spent to great advantage."

It was indeed time well spent, Benjamin; it taught you that beyond Boston, beyond even that England which to your father was the universe, were remote lands where in a dim antiquity men, prodded by some inner *daimōn*, strove and wrestled with each other, with Nature, and with their own reluctant spirits, finally pushing through to what their fellows called success.

Then came a book of Defoe's called *Essays Upon Several Projects*. Of this James Parton [5] says: "It is questionable if there is any other book that has so benefited mankind in the practical manner as this little essay by the author of Robinson Crusoe." Parton's estimate is exaggerated; but

[5] Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin.

no doubt Franklin derived from these papers by the brilliant and unhappy Defoe the seeds of certain ideas which later took concrete form in some of the most celebrated of Franklin's own projects. For example, one of Defoe's essays deals with banks and banking, another with insurance, a third with the organization and operation of Friendly Societies for mutual aid and joint self-help, and still another with academies for instructing the female mind as well as the male.

And then Franklin read the little book "which perhaps," he wrote afterwards, "gave me a turn of thinking that had an influence on some of the principal future events of my life."[6] This was Cotton Mather's "Essay upon the Good that is to be Devised and Designed by those who Desire to Answer the Great End of Life, and to Do Good While they Live," by Franklin called *Essays to Do Good.* Let us note the two last words of this title particularly, for we shall find them cropping up repeatedly throughout Franklin's career. Dr. Mather wrote these hortatory essays in one of his kindlier moods, when he was neither wrestling on the floor of his locked study with the re-embodiment of Jacob's angel nor inciting the superstitious to harry the wretched people upon whom, as condemned witches, the Massachusetts population vented its fears and pent passions. Dr. Mather's theme, in general, was the necessity, in order to enjoy the good life, of carrying the thought of God into the activities of one's every-day occupation. His premises granted, his reasoning was sound, his enthusiasm, as he warmed to his writing, contagious. Franklin accepted Mather's hortations. So deeply impressed was he that many years later he again referred to his debt to Dr. Mather in a letter written in 1784 to Cotton's son, Samuel, as follows:

"When I was a boy I met with a book entitled *Essays to*

[6] Autobiography.

do Good, which, I think, was written by your father. It had been so little regarded by a former possessor that several leaves of it were torn out, but the remainder gave me such a turn of thinking as to have an influence on my conduct through life; for I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good* than on any kind of reputation; and, if I have been, as you seem to think, a useful citizen, the public owes the advantage of it to that book."

Candid Benjamin! Already, perhaps, he was aware of certain frailties; he felt a premonition of those weaknesses which were to assail him in his lonely adolescence; those "errata" which he was later to lament on the printed page; and so he made up his youthful mind that though he might not quite succeed in his ambition to *be* good, he could at least *do* good.

It was about two years later that he encountered another cluster of books which influenced him profoundly. One was Locke's essay *Upon the Human Understanding,* previously referred to, and *The Art of Thinking,* by Messieurs of the Port Royal, a group of French Jansenist laymen now no longer recollected except as the teachers of Racine. The Autobiography says little about these two books, which offer hard going to any youthful reader, but it is possible that Locke's practical teachings and dislike of mystical speculation appealed strongly to Franklin's earthy mind, and that both volumes encouraged that independence in thinking to which the small American philosopher was already inclined by temperament.

It was Shaftesbury and Collins who made him "a real doubter" of the theological dogmas which then dominated New England thought. Of the two writers, Shaftesbury, with his grace and ease, probably pleased the impressionable lad most. It is to be noted that Shaftesbury was the author of two essays which doubtless came into Franklin's

hands — *Inquiry Concerning Virtue* and *Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor*, and that in the former the free-thinking earl wrote: "The Wisdom of what rules and is *First* and *Chief* in nature has made it to be according to the private interest and good of every one to work toward the *general good*."

Franklin also had a second battle with his old enemy, arithmetic, and this time he triumphed over it by easily going through Cocker's *Book of Arithmetick*. Thus fortified, he then took up books on navigation, but on encountering the part dealing with geometry, sighed and gave it up.

An English grammar was the means of acquainting him with a book which caused him to drop the "abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation" common to youth in favor of a more winning method of dealing with his fellow man. This was Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates*. From that time Socrates became one of the boy's heroes, and the Autobiography gives with immense gusto a recital of Franklin's victories over the disputatious through the Socratic method of humble but artful questions.

At this early age a book by one Tryon converted Franklin to the advantages of a vegetable diet, enabling him to brag about his consequent "greater clearness of head and quicker apprehension." But at a later period there was a deplorable fall from vegetarian grace, for Franklin spent an old age groaning with the gout.

IV

The supreme book, however, of Franklin's youth and the one which, to a far greater extent than perhaps even he, with all his self knowledge, realized, was *The Spectator* of Addison and Steele. Something of the excitement he felt at his discovery of an odd volume of the series surges up as

Ledger Photo Service

CHRIST CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA

LONG ATTENDED BY DEBORAH AND SARAH FRANKLIN, AS IT STANDS TODAY.

he writes: "It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it."

With the old thrill humming through his language, he relates how he studied the book, made notes on the various papers, laid them by, and then tried to rewrite them in a form as good as the original. Comparison showed him his defects. He carried his practice even further and finding his vocabulary needed enrichment, turned the tales into verse and back again into prose. These experiments apparently occupied him for a considerable period; the resulting benefit was perceptible. He at last fancied that in certain particulars, he had improved the method or the language, and this encouraged him to think he "might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer."

But in the papers of *The Spectator* the absorptive Franklin discovered much more than the merits of a graceful style, far-ranging vocabulary, and masterful construction. He discovered a new world. It was a world peopled by a society created in Queen Anne's reign and recreated by Joseph Addison, wherein was no wrestling over meticulous moral problems, no groanings of the spirit over abstruse theological dogmas, no grey didactics, nothing funereal, oppressive or depressive, but a tolerant urban world made interesting by human foibles. Whatever its failings, this world was not dull, not narrow, not mean. Human existence to *The Spectator's* contributors was not a moral problem, but a pageant to be regarded with comprehending sympathy marked by an occasional tear and more frequent smiles. To Addison, Steele and their associates life was not a thing to be hated or abstained from, but to be lived, even in its more disagreeable aspects, with a stout heart and a sustaining humor. Life in England under Queen Anne as

portrayed by *The Spectator* was sometimes rather broad in its humor, its amusements were sometimes boisterous, but its manners were urbane and it did not forget to be kind.

Franklin studied this attitude as mirrored in the pages of *The Spectator* and the more he regarded it, the more he admired. It gave him a sense of release. It freed him from whatever uncertainty still remained as to whether in being good it was necessary also to be doleful.

While Franklin was trying, in the endeavor to penetrate to the secret of their charm, to rewrite the papers of Volume III of *The Spectator*, certain passages must have stamped their thought deeply upon his retentive memory. For example, perhaps this from essay No. 179:

"I may cast my readers under two general divisions, the Mercurial and the Saturnine. The first are the gay part of my disciples, who require speculations of wit and humor; the others are those of a more solemn and sober turn, who find no pleasure but in papers of morality and sound sense . . . I make it therefore my endeavour to find out entertainments of both kinds."

Since the New England cast of thought at that time was undoubtedly saturnine, and since Franklin at an early age showed himself so little in sympathy with it, it would not be strange if he chose that "gay part." He did choose it; he, as we shall see, definitely aligned himself with the Mercurial Division of the human race, who reconcile themselves to the trials of existence with saving speculations of wit and humor. After the roast beef, fruit and flowers! After the dirge the saraband!

But Franklin was too canny to permit his enthusiasms, however great, to gallop off with him. He did not overlook the necessity, for an editor, of providing "entertainments of both kinds."

In No. 197 of *The Spectator* occurs another passage

which must have given pause to our young-man-in-search-of-improvement:

"Avoid disputes as much as possible . . . if you are at any time obliged to enter an argument, give your reasons with the utmost coolness and modesty . . ."

Up to this time Franklin had been a contentious, somewhat self-satisfied youth, much given to contradiction. He so confesses in his description of the argument with his boy friend, John Collins, about the propriety of educating the female sex. "I had caught it," Franklin records, "by reading my father's books of dispute about *religion*."[7] In the dispute with Collins, Franklin, as a reader of Defoe's *Projects*, took the side of the women, but failing to prevail, put his arguments on paper and sent them to Collins, who replied. Three or four letters had thus passed when Franklin's ever-critical father, discovering the correspondence, shook his head over his son's papers, pointing out that Benjamin had fallen "far short in elegance of expression, in method and perspicuity." Benjamin, by now desiring elegance above all things, began to mend his combative ways. The result is reflected in this passage of Franklin's Autobiography, closely paralleling *The Spectator:*

. . . "I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power *of doing good*[8] by a positive, assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure."

He even abandoned the Socratic method in the course of time, "retaining," he relates, "only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence."

[7] Autobiography.
[8] Italics ours.

V

If the style and sentiments of a book could so greatly influence an impressionable boy, would not its *characters* influence him no less, or even more? In *The Spectator*, which Franklin apparently studied more exhaustively than any other book of his life, the people are types rather than persons, but there is one character who, with a touch here by Addison and a stroke there by Steele, becomes round, alive and human. This is Sir Roger de Coverley.

Franklin could not have been content merely with Volume III of *The Spectator*. He doubtless obtained the rest of the series as they appeared from 1710–11 nearly through 1714. A set of *The Spectator* and of Steele's earlier journal, *The Tatler*, "handsomely bound," were among the effects disposed of by Franklin's will. He therefore must have followed the views and fortunes of Sir Roger from his first appearance until his lamented death at the hands of his creators. The sturdy knight scarcely could have failed to impress himself on Franklin's ambitious imagination.

Every boy between the ages of 12 and 16 is unconsciously seeking among the men he knows a model after which he can build himself. Often the model is the boy's father. But Franklin had already become antagonistic towards his father's beliefs and leanings. What more natural, then, at a period when he was spending almost the whole of his snatched leisure among books, that he should have found his model man in the book which he had read "over and over"?

Woodrow Wilson says Franklin was "half peasant, half man of the world."[9] Franklin might have remained wholly a peasant, at least in attitude and outlook, had not his early reading made him wish to acquire the elegance, wit, poise

[9] Introduction to Franklin's Autobiography, Century Classics.

and *savoir faire* of superior men. It is not likely he could find these qualities among the grim Puritans he met in the Boston candle shop or in his father's house, and he had already conceived a barely suppressed dislike for men like the Mathers and other graduates of Harvard College.[10] But the character of the worthy Sir Roger de Coverley he could admire wholly.

It seems altogether probable, then, that in boyhood Franklin took Sir Roger de Coverley, as limned and sculptured by Addison and Steele, as the pattern of the man he some day hoped to be, and that all his life Franklin, subconsciously, strove to shape his own character after that sturdy, independent and kindly figure.

So far as we know, none of the previous biographers of Franklin, all observant and studious men, has noticed the striking likeness between the fictional character of Sir Roger de Coverley and that of Franklin in his riper years; at least none has pointed it out. But let us proceed to the evidence. No. II of *The Spectator* papers, entitled "The Club" — a group of Queen Anne gentlemen who met informally to discuss whatever topics, worldly or abstract, appeared to be interesting, contains, in outlining the personality of Sir Roger, this passage:

"He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him . . . he is now in his 56th year, cheerful, gay, and hearty; keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast

[10] Vide Silence Dogood papers.

in his behaviour that he is rather beloved than esteemed.[11] His tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company."

In the 6th paper an observation from Sir Roger's own mouth is quoted as follows:

"'I lay it down therefore for a rule, that the whole man is to move together; that every action of any importance is to have a prospect of public good; and that the general tendency of our indifferent actions ought to be agreeable to the dictates of reason, of religion, of good breeding.'" The same paper continues:

"I have observed . . . that my friend Sir Roger, amidst all his good qualities, is something of an humourist, and that his virtues as well as his imperfections are, as it were, tinged by a certain extravagance, which makes them particularly *his*, and distinguishes them from those of other men. This cast of mind, as it is generally very innocent in itself, so it renders his conversation highly agreeable, and more delightful than the same degree of sense and virtue would appear in their common and ordinary colors."

In No. VII, dealing with the harmony found in the Coverley household, is the following:

"This proceeds from the humane and equal temper of the man of the house. . . . This makes his own mind untroubled, and consequently unapt to vent peevish expressions, or give passionate or inconsistent orders to those about him. Thus respect and love go together. . . ."

In No. XX is this:

"My worthy friend Sir Roger is one of those who is not only at peace within himself, but beloved and esteemed by all about him. He receives a suitable tribute for his universal benevolence to mankind in the returns of affection

[11] "Esteemed" is used here in the old sense of regarded coldly.

and good will which are paid him by every one that lives within his neighbourhood."

And finally in No. XXIV the gypsy girl who tells Sir Roger's fortune says to him:

" 'Ah master, that roguish leer of yours makes a pretty woman's heart ache; you ha'n't that simper about the mouth for nothing.' "

Let us see how these descriptions of the amiable Sir Roger match the impressions we derive of Dr. Franklin's character, after it had been long mature, as it appeared to the friends who had had long opportunity to study him. Madame Brillon, the fascinating Frenchwoman who perhaps learned to know him better than any other woman in the world, once said to Franklin in a letter: " You always know how to combine a great measure of wisdom with a touch of roguishness." And again: " Your letter . . . has given me keen pleasure: I found in it that gayety and gallantry which make all women love you, because you love them all." And again: " You combine with the best heart, my lovable Papa, when you wish, the soundest ethics, a lively imagination, and that roguishness, so pleasant, which shows that the wisest man in the world allows his wisdom to be perpetually broken against the rocks of femininity."

Almost at the close of Franklin's life, his sister, Jane Mecom, the " baby " of his mother's children, wrote to him:

" This day my dear brother completes his 84th year. You cannot, as old Jacob, say, Few and evil have they been; except those wherein you have endured such grievous torments latterly, yours have been filled with innumerable good works, benefits to your fellow creatures, and thankfulness to God, that notwithstanding the distressing circumstances before mentioned, yours must be esteemed a glorious life. Great increase of glory and happiness I hope await you. May God mitigate your pain and continue your patience yet

many years, for who that knows and loves you can bear the thought of surviving you in this gloomy world? "

The Rev. Manasseh Cutler, a scholar and botanist, who visited Franklin in his old age, thus wrote of him: "His voice was low, but his countenance open, frank, and pleasing. . . . His manners are perfectly easy, and everything about him seems to diffuse an unrestrained freedom and happiness. He has an incessant vein of humor, accompanied with an uncommon vivacity, which seemed as natural and involuntary as his breathing."

And finally there is the celebrated letter of George Washington, written to Franklin in 1789:

"If to be venerated for benevolence, if to be admired for talents, if to be esteemed for patriotism, if to be beloved for philanthropy, can gratify the human mind, you must have the pleasing consolation to know that you have not lived in vain."

If it be true, then, as we believe, that Franklin sought to make his character conform to that of Sir Roger de Coverley as an ideal, who can deny that he thunderously succeeded?

Courtesy of Kennedy & Co., New York

ALLEGORICAL PAINTING OF FRANKLIN DISCOVERING
THE IDENTITY OF LIGHTNING AND ELECTRICITY
BY BENJAMIN WEST

Chapter II

"The Business of Life is with Matter"

— Thomas Jefferson

I

IT is Benjamin's bookish inclinations that eventually determine Josiah Franklin to make a printer of his smallest son. Benjamin's older brother, James, is already established in the printing trade. It is respectable enough and not an ungodly business like going to sea. But Benjamin, no doubt to the disgust of his patient father, hangs back on the halter. He still, because he is a water-bred boy and also perhaps because he dreams of beholding those thousand oddities of the world described in Burton's *Historical Collections,* hankers for the ocean wide. At last, though, he dutifully gives in, and signs the indentures which bind him until he shall be 21 years old, to James, a choleric and jealous-natured young man with whom the saucy Benjamin almost at once gets into rows.

To the printing-house, however, the 12-year-old Benjamin becomes soon reconciled. It enables him to meet booksellers' apprentices, who filch for him an occasional book, though only " a small one," from their masters' stocks. Ben returns these borrowed volumes " soon and clean," thus becoming one of the few book-borrowers of that kind known to history. He also borrows books from a kindly tradesman, a customer of his brother.

Ben's time for reading is at night, before and after work during the day, and on Sundays, when he manages to avoid church by inventing excuses to go to the print-shop, where he can be luxuriously alone. According to the theological

teachings of the time, this Sabbath-breaking should have been penalized by Heaven, and Benjamin's first literary Sunday is doubtless passed with some apprehension of lightning from above. But when another Sunday comes and no angry stroke falls, he breathes — and reads — more easily. Long afterwards he wrote to a friend, describing the amusements and gayeties of a Sunday in Flanders:

"I looked around for God's Judgments, but saw no signs of them. The cities were well built and full of inhabitants, the markets filled with plenty, the people well-favoured and well clothed, the fields well tilled, the cattle fat and strong, the fences, houses, and windows all in repair, and no Old Tenor (early American paper money) anywhere in the country; which would almost make one suspect that the Deity is not so angry at that offence as a New England Justice."

II

Benjamin now feels the first stirs of adolescent blood, which still retains the strain contributed to it by his versifying maternal grandfather, Peter Folger. He writes verses.

Enters the printing brother. He sees the commercial possibilities of the thing, and induces Ben not only to write ballads, but when printed to hawk them about Boston's streets. One is called "The Lighthouse Tragedy"; the other records the capture of Blackbeard, the pirate. The event makes "a great noise."[1] It is the germ of Tin Pan Alley and American popular song-making, since become a major industry. Little Benjamin beams with that vanity, the obtrusions of which he struggles to subdue for the rest of his life. Enters the lowering villain. It is Ben's father. He sets about the favorite New England pastime of killing youthful joy. Leave poetry to loafers. There's no money

[1] Autobiography.

in it. Verse-makers are "generally beggars."[2] Stick to business. Get on. "The business of life is with matter."

"So," wrote Franklin at the age of 65, with an almost perceptible sigh, "I escaped being a poet, most probably a very bad one."

III

When Benjamin is about 15 years old, James Franklin begins to issue a newspaper, the *New England Courant*. The first number is dated August 17, 1721. The Autobiography calls it the second in America. But it was actually the fourth. The first American newspaper, regularly issued, was the *Boston News-Letter*, which appeared April 24, 1704, two years before Franklin was born. James's friends shake their heads over his project; one newspaper is all that America (population 400,000) can support. But the paper continues, partly due to the contributions of several humorous young Bostonians, mostly medical men, who like thus to amuse themselves. Ben, when not setting type, running the press and delivering the papers, looks on with envy. Remembering his success with the ballads, he itches with a desire to write a few pieces himself, in that prose which he feels is sometimes almost as good as *The Spectator's*. He does so, but knowing the contemptuous disposition of his brother, he dares not offer them directly, but slips one, written in a disguised hand, under the door of the printshop at night. It is signed, significantly, with a woman's name — "*Silence Dogood*." Let us note well these two words. We shall hear of them again.

James Franklin and his advisers read it the next morning. They deem it good. They guess at the author, naming men known in the community for ingenuity. Little Benjamin, pretending to potter busily about the shop, listens greedily

[2] Autobiography.

to their comments, his whole being suffused with an "exquisite pleasure." Benjamin Franklin, journalist and writer on public affairs, is born.

The first paper by Mistress Silence Dogood is followed by several others, also slipped in via the door crack. They duly appear. They create talk. The small author's colonial hat can no longer contain his head. He divulges his secret. He expects a slap on the back from his brother. He gets something to the contrary.

"What! You wrote those pieces? On *my* time, too, I'll wager. You think you're smart, don't you? You'll be getting the swell-head now. Get back to your type. The customer's waiting for that job. Silence Dogood indeed! Your name ought to be Talkative Dobad."

Benjamin goes back to the composing case in silence. All the rest of the day he and his brother do not speak. Fifty years later he wrote:

"I fancy his harsh and tyrannical treatment of me might be a means of impressing me with that aversion to arbitrary power that has stuck to me through my whole life."

But the Dogood papers, though scorned by James, raise Benjamin in the estimation of James's friends, and they eye the small round figure moving silently among the type cases with a curious interest. "You never can tell," they say, "about these Franklins."

IV

Since the "Silence Dogood" pieces were the first of those papers, essays and disquisitions of which Franklin was so prolific during a long life, they merit more than casual study. It is, in the first place, a curious fact that Franklin should have chosen to make his first appearance in the press disguised, so to speak, as a woman.

Franklin had a pronounced feminine element in his nature and personality. This feminine element was visible even in his physical structure. His face was round. His shoulders were round. His limbs were round. Symbolists would say that Franklin typified the circle — all round. As he matured, he became conciliatory, non-combative, and preferred to please rather than antagonize. He exhibited none of the harsh angularities characteristic of such associates as Washington and Jefferson. All his life he showed his undisguised pleasure in the society of women. He frequently appeared happier and more at ease in his correspondence with feminine friends than with his masculine ones. If any great man has ever understood women, Franklin did.

As "Silence Dogood" he described himself, in terms of his ideal Sir Roger de Coverley, as handsome and good-natured, frequently witty, and always courteous and affable. Also as "a hearty lover of the Clergy and all good Men, and a mortal Enemy to arbitrary Government and unlimited Power." One of the very first Dogood letters, entitled "Dream," is a satire at the expense of Harvard College, whose graduates are described as prone to heed the beckoning finger of the goddess *Pecunia*. "Every peasant, who had wherewithal, was proposing to send one of his children, at least, to this famous place; and in this case, most of them consulted their own purses instead of their children's capacities. So that I observed a great many, yea, the most part of those who were traveling thither, were little better than blockheads and dunces."

Another Dogood paper reveals that sympathy for women, rare among the men of Franklin's time, which had previously been exhibited in Benjamin's boyish debates with his chum Collins. "Their Youth," says Mrs. Dogood, using almost the exact words of Defoe's *Essay on Projects*, "is spent to teach them to stitch and sew, or make Baubles.

They are taught to read indeed and perhaps to write their names, or so; and that is the Heigth of a Woman's Education." With that inconsistency frequently described as truly feminine, Mrs. Dogood then turns around and, in another paper, abuses her sex for indulging in the monstrous hoop-petticoats of the period. She asks "whether they, who pay no Rates or Taxes, ought to take up more Room in the King's Highway, than the Men, who yearly contribute to the Support of the Government."

Other letters deal with freedom of speech — "Who ever would overthrow the Liberty of a Nation, must begin by subduing the Freeness of Speech; a *Thing* Terrible to Publick Traytors"; with hypocrisy in religion, it being a question whether a commonwealth suffers more from hypocritical pretenders to religion or from the openly profane; with drunkenness; and with night walkers on Boston Common, a subject no doubt suggested to Franklin by a paper in the *Spectator* relating a nocturnal adventure of Sir Roger de Coverley's in London.

Still another Dogood paper owes its origin to Franklin's study of Defoe's *Essay on Projects;* it offers a plan for the insurance of widows, concluding, in the words of Silence: "For my own Part, I have nothing left to live on, but Contentment and a few Cows; and tho' I cannot expect to be reliev'd by this Project (*sic*), yet it would be no small satisfaction to me to see it put in practice for the Benefit of Others." The next letter contains a bit of the Franklinian drollery which persisted in most of his writings to his dying day. Margaret Aftercast, a spinster, begs Mrs. Dogood also to form a project for the relief of "all those penitent Mortals of the fair Sex, that are like to be punish'd with their Virginity until Old Age, for the Pride and Insolence of their Youth." Franklin was ever concerned about women; married and unmarried, elderly spinsters, fruitful

mothers, bereft widows and blooming maids — he liked them all; and when he could, made love to them all.

At 16, then, we find Franklin to be a free thinker, a foe of religious intolerance, a potential rebel against powers arbitrarily exercised, and a defender of women's rights. He has revealed his abilities as a printer, a verse-maker, a humorous writer, and a journalist. He is getting on.

Chapter III

The Boy Publisher

I

SOON after becoming apprenticed to his brother, Benjamin concludes with him a deal betraying that canny practicality which later enables him to conquer situations that another kind of nature might have accepted supinely. Benjamin has found that he can maintain himself very comfortably on a meatless diet. He therefore goes to James and offers to find his own food if James will give him half the money that Benjamin's board is costing him. James agrees instantly. So while the other apprentices are absent at their meals, Benjamin remains in the shop holding in one hand a raisin sandwich and in the other one of the precious books which he is now able to buy. He is putting into books half the money obtained from James.

This abstemiousness, added to other independent traits exhibited by his younger brother, arouses James's dislike. Benjamin isn't docile, he isn't "regular." James becomes surly and critical. Benjamin resents his slurs. These fraternal disputes are brought before their father. Benjamin tries out his modest Socratic method of presenting the case. He wins. This naturally doubles James's rage. In secret he falls upon Benjamin and beats him, not once but often. Ben, miserable but silent, bides his time. He awaits an opportunity to tear his indenture papers to pieces and fling them in James's lowering face. Fate and the Massachusetts Council come to the rescue.

II

The quarrels between the Franklin brothers have not hampered the growth of the *New England Courant*. It is a success. It is condemned as sensational, and worthy folk, who otherwise would ignore it, buy it to see just how sensational it is. The clergy denounce it, and almost at once the circulation goes up by the dizzy figure of 40. A furious letter, attributed to Cotton Mather, appears in the rival *News Letter*. It compares the *Courant* contributors to the Hell Fire Club in England, whose members are said to have erected an altar to the Devil. It is probable that Benjamin has never heard of the Hell Fire Club before. The name interests him; he has a liking for clubs. We shall see what becomes of this interest.

Dr. Mather goes on to denounce the *Courant* as "full freighted with nonsense, unmanliness, railery, prophaneness, immorality, arrogance, calumnies, lies, contradictions, and what not, all tending to quarrels and divisions, and to debauch and corrupt the minds and manners of New England." Increase Mather announces that he has ceased to buy the paper. The *Courant* replies that this may be so; nevertheless he sends a boy around for it. But the impudence of the paper has irritated the authorities and one day they nail it.

The issue of June 11, 1722, contains a hoax story — possibly originating with Benjamin, who loved hoaxes — about a pirate ship seen off Block Island. "We are advised from Boston," says the *Courant*, "that the government of the Massachusetts are fitting out a ship, (the Flying Horse,) to go after the pirates, to be commanded by Captain Peter Papillon, and 'tis thought he will sail some time this month, wind and weather permitting."

The humor of the concluding phrase is enhanced for those who know that *papillon* is French for butterfly. They laugh, and eagerly pass the paper around. The Council has stood many things from the *Courant*, but it cannot stand being laughed at. James and Benjamin are summoned for an examination. They refuse to give the name of the story's author. James, as the publisher, is sent to jail. A week there is enough for him. He pleads to be let out. He grovels. He confesses that he has sinned, and, besides, his health is very bad. In a month he is released. Benjamin, the kid brother, meantime gets out the paper. He enjoys the opportunity. He gives the colony's rulers a few extra rubs. The rubbing continues freely for another six months. Finally the authorities explode.

The province is bossed by Governor Samuel Shute, one of those far-flung dunderheads who through the years have done so much to start seams in the British Ship of State. He has quarreled with the Massachusetts General Court, and in a dudgeon is off home to tell mama about it. The *Courant* asks this question: If, as many contend, the Governor means to hurt the province, are not the ministers who pray for the success of his homeward voyage, praying in effect for the destruction of the province? [1] This leads the *Courant* writer — whose style and thought are much like the irreverent Benjamin's — to a consideration of too-muchness in religion, which is deemed "worse than none at all. The world abounds with knaves and villains; but of all knaves, the *religious knave* is the worst; and villainies acted under the cloak of religion are the most execrable. Moral honesty, though it will not of itself, carry a man to heaven, yet I am sure there is no going thither *without it.* And however such men, of whom I have been speaking, may palliate their wickedness, they will find that *publicans and harlots will*

[1] John Bach McMaster in "Benjamin Franklin As a Man of Letters."

enter the kingdom of heaven before themselves." The italics are the *Courant's.*

The Council at once issues an order forbidding James Franklin "to print or publish the New England Courant, or any other pamphlet or paper of the like nature, except it be first supervised by the Secretary of this Province."

In Boston's respectable circles the ban placed on the *Courant* is doubtless approved. It is high time to put a damper on those young Franklins. Their writings, once merely foolish, have become inflammatory. But one voice is raised in defense of the Franklins. It comes from Philadelphia.

Philadelphia! It is a name which thereafter is sweet in the ears of that Benjamin who rarely forgets anything.

The Philadelphia *Weekly Mercury,* established in 1719, thus comments satirically on the drastic order laid against James:

"An indifferent person would judge, from this conduct, that the Assembly of Massachusetts were oppressors and bigots, 'who made religion only an engine of destruction to the people.'" It concludes with this comment: "By private letters from Boston, we are informed, that the bakers were under great apprehensions of being forbid baking any more bread, unless they will submit it to the Secretary as supervisor-general and weigher of the dough, before it is baked into bread and offered for sale."

However, the ban is maintained. James, as publisher and printer of the *Courant,* is done for. Who shall carry on the paper? A council of war is held in the print-shop. All the liveliest contributors are there. Their eyes fall on Benjamin, working tranquilly before his type cases. They already have a respect for Benjamin. He can write, he knows how to get out the paper, and he isn't afraid. Benjamin is clearly the man. Unanimously they choose him.

Thereafter the *Courant* appears with a new name at the masthead.

Benjamin Franklin, publisher, is born. Age 17.

III

The first issue of the *Courant* under Franklin sounds a "keynote" unquestionably Benjaminesque: "The present undertaking . . . is designed purely for the diversion and merriment of the reader . . . to entertain the town with the most comical and diverting incidents of human life which, in so large a place as Boston, will not fail of a universal exemplification: Nor shall we be wanting to fill up these papers with a grateful interspersion of more serious morals, which may be drawn from the most ludicrous and odd parts of life."

It is thus that Benjamin announces himself as the American *Spectator*. He even proclaims that the paper is now issued by a "club," which exists "for the Propagation of Sense and Good Manners among the docible part of Mankind in His Majesty's Plantations in America," under the guidance of the good Dr. Janus. Dr. Janus is simply Sir Roger de Coverley Americanized. He is set forth as "a chearly Christian . . . a man of good temper, courteous Deportment, sound Judgment; a mortal Hater of Nonsense, Foppery, Formality and endless Ceremony."

IV

One of Benjamin's first issues contains a letter from a supposed reader warning the editor against casting reflections on the Boston clergy. "But," continues the paper, "tho they are the *Best of Men*, yet they are but Men at the best, and by consequence subject to like *Frailties* and

Passions as other Men; and when we hear of the *Imprudencies* of any of them, we should cover them with the mantle of Love and Charity. . . ."

Since Benjamin is already being "pointed at with horror as an infidel or atheist,"[2] this passage may be taken as a mere fling at the Boston clergy in general. On the other hand, is anything specific aimed at? Did Franklin have in mind any particular incident deserving the mantle of charity?

Let us see. We know that one of the lad's hostile critics is the Rev. Cotton Mather, the witch-hunter, to whose excoriating sermons in the Old South Church, near his home in Milk Street, he has probably often listened when he would prefer to be locked luxuriously in an attic reading books.

Mather's first wife died in 1702. Some time later a young lady, "accomplished and comely," called to see him. She wished to become better acquainted with him, she said, for the purpose of religious improvement. Mather temporized; he said he feared their colloquies might be misunderstood. But the lady persisted. She came again. And again. There came upon Mather a racking trial. In his Diary he confessed his "sore distresses and temptations" concerning her. The lady continued to call.

Talk ensued. The community buzzed. Mather, seeing the danger but unable to forbid her the house, finally, with a mighty effort, wrote to her mother. The young lady came no more. Soon afterward, at the suggestion of friends, Mather took a second wife, a widow.

Did Franklin know about this incident? He, a newspaper man in a small town, with ears alert to gossip? He, the target of Mather's blazings? We must assume that he did. And, having his little vein of malice, he could scarcely

[2] Autobiography.

forbear to make subtle use of it. And there would be readers who would forgive him for it.

V

Not content with this, the democratic *Courant* soon afterward appears with another fantastic piece which must have shocked the strict religious folk and political rulers of Boston, — all piously loyal to England and England's customs — no less. It deals with the discussion by the Club of "Hat Honour" and proceeds:

"Adam was never called Master Adam; we never read of Noah Esquire, Lot, Knight and Baronet, nor the Right Honourable Abraham, Viscount Mesopotamia, Baron of Canaan; no, no, they were plain Men, honest Country grasiers, that took care of their families and their Flocks. Moses was a great Prophet, and Aaron a priest of the Lord; but we never read of the Reverend Moses, nor the Right Reverend Father in God, Aaron, by Divine Providence, Lord Arch-Bishop of Israel; Thou never sawest Madam Rebecca in the Bible, my Lady Rachel; nor Mary, tho' a Princess of the Blood after the death of Joseph, call'd the Princess Dowager of Nazareth; no, plain Rebecca, Rachel, Mary, or the Widow Mary, or the like; It was no Incivility then to mention their naked Names as they were expressed."

There is no signature to this paper, but the hand, even to the elided *e* in the past tense of verbs, is Esau's. It is also readily identifiable in this extract from another essay:

"Upon the whole, Friend Janus, we may conclude, that the *Anti-Couranteers* are a sort of *Precisians*, who mistaking Religion for the peculiar whims of their own distemper'd Brain, are for cutting or stretching all men to their own

Standard of Thinking . . . Sir Thomas Hope Blount in his Essays, has said enough to convince us of the Unreasonableness of this sour Temper among Christians: and with his words I shall conclude:

"'Certainly (*says he*) of all sorts of men, none do more mistake the Divine Nature, and by consequence do greater mischief to Religion, than those who would persuade us, that to be truly religious, is to renounce all the Pleasures of Humane Life; As if Religion were a *Caput Mortuum*, a heavy, dull, insipid thing; that has neither Heat, Life or Motion in it. . . .' Whereas (really) Religion is of an Active Principle, it not only elevates the mind and invigorates the Fancy; but it admits of Mirth, and pleasantness of Conversation, and indulges us in our Christian Liberties; and for this reason, says the Lord *Bacon, It is no less impious to shut where God Almighty has open'd, than to open where God Almighty has shut.*" The italics are the author's.

We quote this *Courant* editorial at length because it states the creed to which Franklin adhered, in the main, during his life of 84 years. For him the religion of *active* principle. For him the religion of heat, life and motion. For him the religion which neither invades the shut nor ignores the unshut.

VI

The *Courant* thrives. Its price is raised from three to four pence, and a Publick Notice is printed that Advertisements will be inserted at a moderate price. The boy publisher is exhilarated. The future widens before him, glorious, free, subscription-lined. He becomes, as he admitted later, a little "saucy and provoking." And then falls the long-poised blow from Heaven.

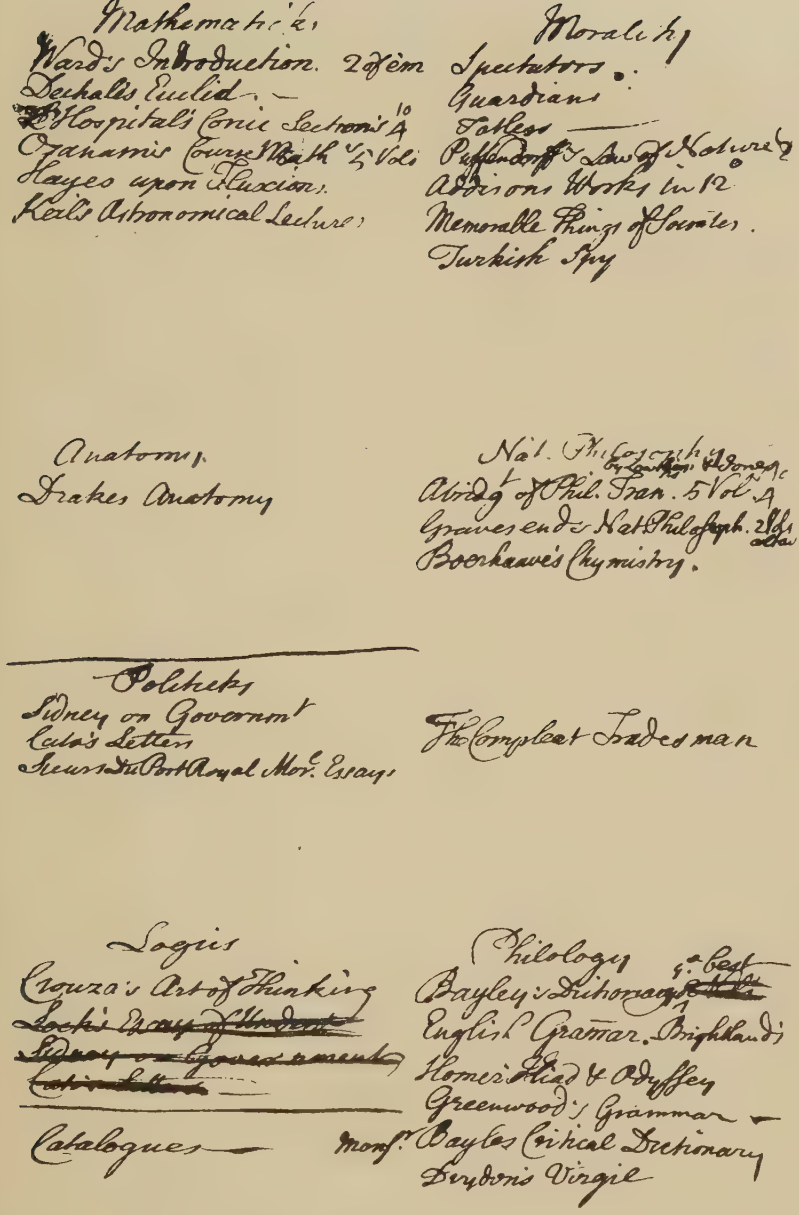
When Benjamin became editor of the *Courant*, James,

to avoid further penalties from the authorities, cancelled his brother's old indenture papers, but got Benjamin's signature to new ones, which were kept secret. This arrangement was almost sure to cause trouble. It did.

James, keenly conscious of his own recent cowardice and bitterly envious of Benjamin's mounting success, suffers from that complex so frequently associated with the word inferiority. Unable to prevail over his younger brother by force of will or character, he again resorts to beatings. Ben, reminding him of the cancelled indentures, proclaims a declaration of independence. In short, he quits.

Almost instantly the gales of fate, so long withheld, burst upon the saucy Benjamin. He can find no work elsewhere, for James has already had him blacklisted. His father takes sides with James. Fair friends turn cool. Boston, saying "Aha!", predicts a scandalous end for a presumptuous youth. Everywhere Benjamin encounters concealed hostility, open sneers. He turns a little sick. He suddenly wants to get away from it all. He thinks he will hate the human race less in New York. But in his bewilderment, his soreness, he can devise no plan. For relief he turns to the friend he most looks up to — the facile, the ingenious Collins. Collins has his defects; he despises women, a trait which Benjamin dislikes, and is a little irresponsible, but in scheming he is a perfect Tom Sawyer. Collins is enchanted. "Leave it to me." Holding in his mirth, he goes to one of his numerous low-life friends, the skipper of a New York sloop. He arranges the passage, gravely informing the sympathetic skipper that Benjamin — studious, straitly-reared, philosophical Benjamin — has got a girl into trouble!

Ben's books have already done him several good turns. They now do him another. They are converted into the cash which every voyager to foreign shores must have. Se-



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PORTION OF A LIST OF BOOKS FOR THE PHILADELPHIA LIBRARY IN FRANKLIN'S HANDWRITING

CONSPICUOUS IN THIS LIST ARE THE BOOKS WHICH MOST INFLUENCED THE YOUTHFUL FRANKLIN. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT VOLUMES OF "THE SPECTATOR" ARE RECOMMENDED UNDER THE HEAD OF "MORALITY."

From the Ford collection in the New York Public Library.

cretly Collins slips him aboard the ship. Anchor is weighed. The sails fill. Boston's low houses grow dim. Adam is driven forth from the garden. Mohammed begins his hegira. But Benjamin, after all, has won his wish. He has gone to sea.

Chapter IV

Exile

I

IT takes three days to make the voyage of 300 miles from Boston to New York, but the weather is good, the early autumn air cool and limpid, and Benjamin's spirits, never long in a slump, bound upward. Characteristically, he begins to look about him for things to be observed. During a calm off Block Island he finds the sailors amusing themselves by fishing for tomcod. Put on the galley fire, these fish give forth a savoury odor. It curls appetizingly about the nostrils of the boy passenger. Up to now he has been a devout vegetarian. The spirit continues sturdy, but the flesh hankers after the fish pots.

It is, as we have observed, the beginning of the Age of Reason. Benjamin, being a man of his period, therefore surveys the subject of vegetarianism in the light of the new dawn. Upon examination he finds that the fish which are hauled on deck contain other fish within them. He rationalizes the situation. It is clear that the caught fish deserve no mercy. The vegetarian theory slides overboard with a rattling crash. He falls upon the guilty fish with relish.

"So convenient it is," he remarked later, "to be a *reasonable* creature, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything one has a mind to do."

Sly Benjamin! Already you are observing the workings of human nature, in yourself and others, with that canny humor which is to teach you to get along with your fellow men in a spirit of accommodation which provides charity for all.

II

He lands upon the jutting cobbles of New York streets in October, that month in which the climate, regretting the unreasonable heats and vapors of the summer, and with the dingy snows of winter yet lodged in the North, bestows upon Manhattan a lifting air which has been justly compared to the finest claret. The population of the town is about 7000. Benjamin walks about the narrow, meandering cow paths and pig promenades looped about the toe of the island which are known to the Dutch burghers as streets. The curious houses, of Low Country architecture, are built with their gable ends outward. Benjamin, with an inveterate interest in the recorded thoughts of men, looks about for a bookshop. But he sees none, because there is none. New Yorkers are intent on money and when the day's bartering is over, they wish to be abundantly amused. They import books from Europe to use as shelf-decorations; they plead they have no time to read them. But there is a printshop in the town and Ben soon finds it. It is kept by William Bradford, the first New York printer, who is one day to occupy a grave in Trinity Churchyard so that smartly dressed stenographers and pug-nosed flappers may have a noontime centre around which to eat their lettuce sandwiches, plentifully spread with mayonnaise. Bradford has been chased out of Pennsylvania for calling William Penn "ye Lord Penn" and other deeds offensive to the Assembly. "The old sophister" [1] has no work for the Boston lad, but suggests he can get a job under his son, Andrew, in Philadelphia. Ben likes the notion. Is not Philadelphia the fraternal town whose *Weekly Mercury* raised a sympathetic voice in defense of the Franklin freedom of speech?

[1] Autobiography.

He starts for Amboy, on the Jersey side, in an old tub of a boat with another passenger, a drunken Dutchman, who falls overboard. Ben drags him out and finds in his pocket a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, a title which must have seemed strikingly appropriate at that time. They are driven on Long Island and lie there all night wet, cold, and foodless. They reach Amboy after thirty wretched hours.

Benjamin, being, like a true exile, light in the pocket, sets out on foot for Burlington, fifty miles away. All day he tramps in a drizzling rain, a forlorn youth in a strange land where he knows not a human being. His usual cheerfulness sinks far below zero. He thinks of Boston, his friends there, the ample table spread by a careful mother, the security of his job if he had only kept his mouth shut, his pen still, his mind closed. He has thrown away everything. For what? To walk through the flat barrens of New Jersey in the rain!

III

His spirits touch bottom that night when at a poor inn he is questioned as if he were a runaway servant. He knows he looks the part. His rough, home-made working clothes are stuffed with his belongings. He has been without sleep. And he is very wet.

When things reach their lowest point, there is nowhere for them to go but up. The next day he finds a better inn, kept by a Dr. Brown, a defeated and disillusioned man. But the old fire re-kindles when Brown discovers in this bedraggled youth an alert mind, a bookish taste, an original turn of speech, and a quirky humor. They discuss the state of letters, philosophy, politics, religion, men, women. They take stock of the universe, laughing as they look down upon its antics from a far height. They return to earth and tell each other earthy stories.

The next day Benjamin finds the world recuperating. The conversation with the vagabond doctor has exorcised the evil spirits from his mind. The droll smile returns to his rounded countenance. In Burlington it wins him a woman friend, a gingerbread-seller. She cannot resist this waggish fellow. Few women can. She bids him lodge at her house, and gives him a good dinner. Money she refuses, but coyly accepts the mate to his pot of ale.

That evening he hails a rowboat headed for Philadelphia. It carries him to Market Street Wharf. He steps out with a dollar and some coppers in his pocket into a city whose life he is to widen, whose history he is to enrich, for more than half a century. The strange lad's hands are empty, his pockets nearly so, his sagging coat contains naught but stuffed-in shirts and home-knit stockings; nevertheless he comes laden with gifts.

His entry is signalized by a characteristic Franklinism. He gives all his change to the boatman. "A man," he remarks, "being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps thro' fear of being thought to have but little."

Chapter V

The New Home

I

IT is forty years after the landing of William Penn. Strong colonies founded by English Quakers and Welsh and Irish farmers line the banks of the Delaware from the falls of Trenton to Chester. Frugal and hard-working Germans have given their village on the Wissahickon the name of Germantown. Philadelphia is a market town of 5,000 people, surrounded by thick forests of hardwoods sheltering bear, deer, Indians, and an abundance of other wild game.

The Pennsylvanians have thrived since the beginning. Their community life is not rent by religious factionalism as in Boston, but they have an internal quarrel sufficiently troublesome. It is between the land-owning class and the common people. The former consists of the Proprietaries, who originally acquired title to tracts in the vast area of land granted to Penn by Charles II, lying between the possessions of the Duke of York, in New Jersey, and those of Lord Baltimore in Maryland. The Proprietaries occasionally are disturbed in their serene enjoyment of ownership by threats of taxation. They cannot bear the idea. They become clamorous and abusive. They fence themselves in. This fence has created a line of division between two opposing forces. Every newcomer, as soon as he acquires an influence, however small, is compelled to take one side or the other. He must "line up." The freshly arrived immigrant from Boston, capital one dollar, is only a journeyman

printer. But if and when he makes a little money and begins to be respected by his neighbors, which side shall he choose, and what will be the consequence of that choice? We shall see.

II

The very first incident which occurs to Benjamin as, soiled, tired and hungry, he walks up from the wharf towards the market house is one of those dramatic ones which he loves. Our Benjamin has a bit of the showman's instinct. His pockets are stuffed with rolled-up shirts and coarse woolen stockings, also with not a little vanity — that confidence in himself which is to stiffen his backbone in the face of many over-awing situations. "It would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity among the other comforts of life."[1]

A boy comes along carrying bread. Ben asks him where he got it. The boy tells him where to find the baker's, which is open, though it is Sunday. Ben goes to the shop in Second Street, and asks for "bisket." In Philadelphia they are not imaginative. The shop people do not see before them a hungry boy who wants food — any kind of food. They see merely a stranger, evidently from foreign parts, who has asked for "bisket." They do not trifle with bread that way in Philadelphia: they do not make such things. They shake their heads. Ben then asks for a thrippenny loaf. Another headshake. The exasperated stranger then flings downs his money and asks for bread — any name, any style, any shape — so it be bread. Ben receives three great puffy rolls. He is "surpriz'd at the quantity." He realizes he is no longer in stingy Boston. He walks away eating one of the huge rolls, and having no room in his stuffed pockets, sticks the others under each arm.

[1] Autobiography.

Now for the little drama. In Market Street, near Fourth, he passes, standing in the doorway of a respectable dwelling, a tidy young woman. She is fresh of cheek and of plump and pleasing figure. She has a childish face but a practical and prognathous chin. She has narrowed eyes which see everything. Being at the age when most of her girl friends have already won a husband, she inspects, without seeming to, the figure of the approaching young man. He is badly dressed, his long-tailed coat bulges at the sides, his heavy shoes make a clumping noise, and he is eating bread in the streets. He carries two rolls insanitarily under his arms. She loses interest. Such an awkward, boorish youth could not possibly mean anything to her young eyes. Her glance turns elsewhere. The young man walks slowly on and circles back to the wharf, where he gives his two remaining rolls to a woman and child who came down with him on the boat. On his first day in Philadelphia he does not forget to do good.

A far-seeing friend might have told the young woman in the doorway to save her sniff. In her present pride she happily doesn't know that she is to meet the awkward youth, that she is to like him, that he is to court her mildly but be so indifferent that he is to go away and forget her, that she is to marry a worthless fellow who will desert her, and that at last she is to be glad to accept the lad with the rolls, poor though he still is, at his own time and on his own terms. She is Deborah Read, afterwards Franklin's "Dear Child" for over forty years.

III

The one roll which Benjamin has eaten refreshes him. He cannot keep still. He is curious about the town. He again walks around, but tiring, having rowed all night, he drops into the historic Quaker meeting house at Second and

SARAH ("SALLY") FRANKLIN, DAUGHTER OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

AS MRS. RICHARD BACHE SHE BECAME THE MOTHER OF A NUMEROUS FAMILY. SHE WAS HER FATHER'S CONSTANT AND DEVOTED ATTENDANT AS LONG AS HE LIVED.

Market Streets. Here clean-dressed, kind-faced people sit silently waiting for the Spirit to move. Benjamin cannot wait. He sleeps throughout the service — also silently, let us hope.

Still sleepy, he goes out in search of a lodging. A civil young Quaker leads him to an inn called The Crooked Billet. Here he has his first cooked meal in Philadelphia, which is marred to some extent by the sly questions of persons who, as at the tavern in New Jersey, suspect him of being a runaway. Which he is, but not the kind they have in mind.

After dinner, he lies down in his clothes and sleeps until evening, goes sleepily to supper — the evening meal was called that throughout the American colonies — and then goes to bed again and sleeps until morning.

IV

He arises betimes and goes out to look for what is so necessary to a youth who has fled from home comforts — a job. He finds Andrew Bradford's printshop, and is surprised to encounter just inside the door old man William Bradford, who has just arrived from New York on horseback. William introduces him to son Andrew. The latter has no work for the runaway, but takes him to breakfast. Here Andrew sees that this rough-looking youth from Boston is nobody's fool. He tells Benjamin to try Samuel Keimer, who has just set up a rival printery. Father Bradford sees a chance to kill two birds. He takes Ben to Keimer's place, and there they find the proprietor swearing over his single pair of type cases. He is setting up a series of verses, composed as he goes along, in memory of Aquila Rose, deceased postmaster and assembly clerk, and the poem, expanding to a great length, has used up most of the type.

Old Bradford, calling Keimer "Neighbor," introduces Ben, and then artfully draws from Keimer, whose head is almost solid ivory, the details as to his plans and prospects. Ben listens. So this is how men hornswoggle each other out in the great world! Keimer at last turns to Ben, tests his ability as a compositor, decides he will do, and says he will soon give him a job, though he has nothing just now. Ben goes back to Andrew, who gives him temporary work and takes him in as a lodger.

In a few days Keimer sends for him. Keimer has finished the Rose elegy —

> "Our Rose is withered, and our Eagle's fled,
> In that our dear Aquila Rose is dead"

— and now asks Benjamin to run this off, also a pamphlet, on his wheezy and spavined press. Ben succeeds in doing so, thus making good in his first independent job. Boston can now go hang itself. He's got a job and is drawing wages. The more he examines his present prospects, the better he likes them. There are only two printers in the town, neither of them competent. Bradford doesn't know the business and is illiterate. Keimer can't run his own press. There is a future for an alert, pushful young printer in Philadelphia. He definitely decides to remain here. It is a momentous decision — far more momentous than he knows, for upon it hang the destinies not only of an obscure printer but of an embryo nation.

V

One day Keimer comes up and tells Ben he doesn't like the idea of his lodging with Bradford while working for him. He has found a room for Ben at the home of a friend, a merchant. He bids Ben be ready to go there that evening and be introduced.

Ben's chest has now arrived from Boston, and he dresses for the occasion in his best Sunday clothes. He is presented to the merchant, a Mr. Read, who receives him kindly. But before accepting him as a lodger, Mr. Read wishes him to meet his daughter. He steps to the door.

"Debby!" he calls.

"Yes, father," is the reply, and in walks a tidy young woman. She casts a startled glance at the prospective lodger, and as becomes a colonial maid, demurely lowers her eyes. She recognizes him. It is he-who-eats-rolls-in-the-street. Benjamin, enjoying the situation, says nothing; but later he says much. And Deborah Read lets it be known that she likes his present appearance better than that of a recent Sunday morning; also that his conversation is not disagreeable to her.

VI

Now ensues a period very pleasant to the exile from Boston. He meets, doubtless through Deborah Read, other young people. They are girls with whom he can flirt and boys like himself who enjoy talking of books. He works hard, spends little, and soon recovers not only his self-respect but his sense of humor. The quizzical, mirthful look, in which the girls delight, returns to his eye.

But all this time he keeps his whereabouts a secret from his people. He is still hurt and resentful. He writes not even to his mother or to his dearly loved sister, Jane. He says nothing to anyone in Boston except Collins, upon whom he imposes silence.

This is a very odd behavior on the part of Franklin, who is naturally devoted to his kindred and who rarely treasures resentment for injuries. It may be explained on the ground that he is suffering from a severe reaction against family as institution, against family censure, against family obtuseness.

It is a part of the oft-recurring revolt of the individual against the group. The only healer for such a situation is Time. The prodigal, in spirit when not in flesh, always returns. Meanwhile, blessed be he who letteth alone.

VII

Now occurs an incident which exerts a profound influence on Franklin's life and which teaches him an unforgettable lesson. Arriving at Newcastle is Robert Holmes, master of a sloop running between Boston and Delaware. He hears of Ben's presence in Philadelphia and writes to him, telling of the anxiety of his family in Boston and saying that all will be forgiven and everything done for him, if only he will return. Victory! The family runs up the white flag.

But Benjamin fails to be soothed. He replies to Holmes. He prepares the letter with great care. He writes in measured terms, combining the best Addisonian and Franklinesque styles. He points out that he left Boston not on impulse, but for carefully cogitated reasons, and that his decision is irrevocable. Holmes receives this statesmanlike document when in the company of Sir William Keith, governor of Pennsylvania. He shows the letter to Keith.

Keith is a genial, impulsive man who likes to bestow favors on his social inferiors with an air of great generosity and importance. He reads Benjamin's letter with attention.

"Well, well! And how old is this brother-in-law, pray?"

"Seventeen."

"Indeed? Evidently a remarkable young man. We shall have to look out for him, Holmes. The printers in Philadelphia are a wretched lot. Your brother-in-law has a magnificent opportunity. He should set up in business for

himself. We will send him the public printing. We will advance his interests in every way possible."

A few days later Ben is working near a window with his employer. They see the governor, finely dressed, accompanied by a military officer, pick their way across the street and enter the building. The fatuous Keimer, thinking the visit is to him and having sudden visions of profit and honor, runs down to meet them, but to his astonishment, they push their way past him and approach his hobo hireling. There are stately bows on both sides.

"Have I the honor of addressing Mr. Franklin of Boston?"

Keimer stares at this "like a pig poison'd."

"Yes, your Excellency."

The governor then introduces his companion, Colonel French of Newcastle, and opens the conversation in his best manner. Darting a look of dislike at the hovering Keimer, the governor invites Benjamin to come out with him. Ben accompanies them to a tavern at Third and Market Streets. There over a bottle of Madeira, Keith renews his compliments and finally proposes that Franklin open his own printery and take advantage of the business which he and Colonel French will send him. Keith suggests that Ben's father will help him. Ben doubts it. The governor then offers to give Ben a letter to his father which will clinch the matter. Franklin is to go to Boston at once and present the letter. So it is arranged. The prodigal is about to return, but with more than swine-husks in his pockets.

Chapter VI

The Return From Exile

I

SEVEN months after leaving Boston, Benjamin, in April, 1724, makes his triumphant return to the bosom of his family. And what a difference! Where there were head-shakings and maledictions before, there are now smiles and respectful greetings. The exile returns in a genteel new suit. He wears, perhaps just a trifle ostentatiously, a watch, the mark of a gentleman. His pockets are heavy with nearly five pounds in silver, a raree show in Massachusetts, where they are still struggling with depreciated paper. Friends and former fellow journeymen gather around and say, " Prithee now, don't he look well? "

But amid the general acclaim there is one who is silent. True to form, it is the prodigal's brother. James has remained at home and worked, but has not prospered since Benjamin went away, and his printing enterprise is already on the rocks. One day Benjamin calls at the shop to see him, and possibly also to stage one of the little dramas for which he has a weakness. James receives him coolly, stares, and turns to his work. Benjamin hobnobs with the printers, shows them his watch, carelessly takes out a handful of silver, and gives them a piece-of-eight with which to have a drink all round. For James this is the final blow. He goes home and tells his mother that Benjamin has insulted him before his employees, and that he will never forget or forgive — never!

II

Benjamin's vindication is so complete that he feels good towards all the world. With great magnanimity he even goes to call on the Reverend Cotton Mather — him who only a few months before had been calling the *Courant* fierce names. The divine and the skeptic sit down and converse as if they were old comrades. On the way out an incident occurs which Franklin did not forget for sixty years. He wrote to Cotton's son, Samuel, about it from Passy, France, in 1784. On going through a low passage with a projecting beam, Doctor Mather called out "Stoop! Stoop!"

"Stoop occasionally as you go through the world, my boy, and you will miss many hard bumps."

For this saying and for the advice to do good, Franklin forgives Doctor Mather other shortcomings.

III

Benjamin has saved his chief Philadelphia trophy for a fitting moment. He now hands to his father the letter from Governor Keith. He enjoys his father's evident surprise. But Josiah Franklin is the last man to yield to impulse or pride. He puts the governor's letter in his pocket and says nothing. Privately he questions Robert Holmes, who has meantime returned home, about Keith, draws certain conclusions, and then informs Benjamin that at 18 years he is too young to launch into an independent business; that he is free to return to Philadelphia; but that if on reaching the age of 21, he is short of sufficient capital to buy his own plant, he, his father, will make up the difference. Somewhat disappointed at having his dreams thus dashed but still large with self-confidence, Benjamin again takes a sloop

for New York. He carries with him many of the books he has accumulated in Boston.

Meantime Benjamin's favorite chum in Boston, the clever Collins, warmed by Franklin's account of the stir and bustle of lively Philadelphia, has quit his job in the post office and gone to New York to wait for Benjamin.

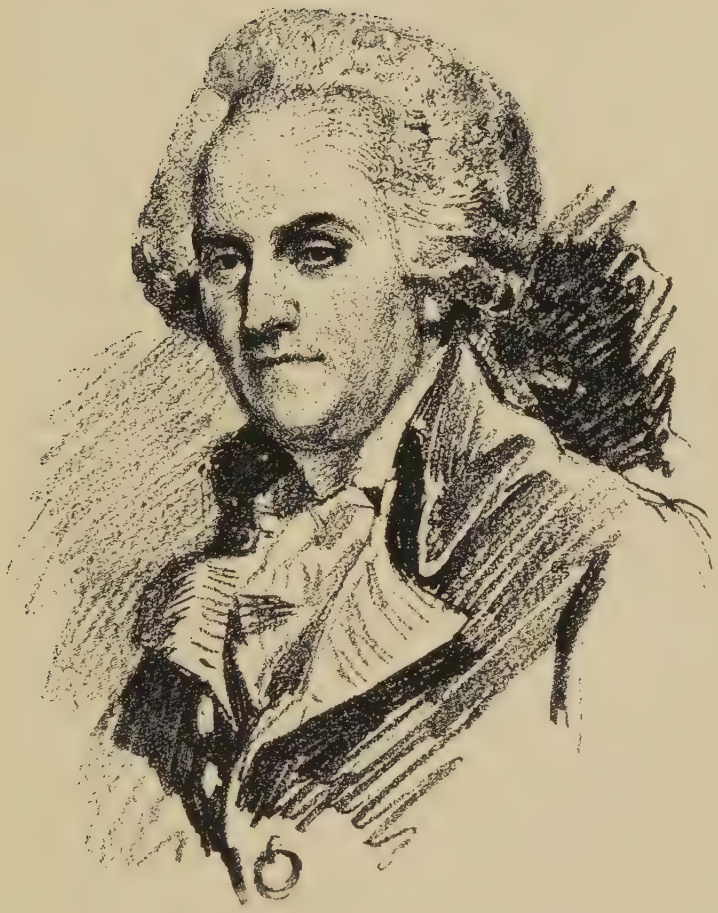
Benjamin's ship calls at Newport. Here two curious incidents occur, one of which leads to the commission of one of those "errata" which plague the perpetrator for years afterward. The other incident does not end so, but it makes Benjamin dangerously familiar with Erratum's face.

At Newport Benjamin has an affectionate meeting with his brother John. A friend of the latter's, one Vernon, asks Benjamin to collect the sum of thirty-five pounds owed to him in Pennsylvania, gives him an order, and requests him to keep the money until sent for.

Part of the cargo which the ship takes on board consists of two young women. They and Benjamin, by the merest accident, fall into conversation. They too are bound for New York. Daily he finds them on deck, where he stops for a chat and a joke or two. The trio and their merriment fall under the observation of another woman passenger — "a grave, sensible, matron-like Quaker." To the pure all things are impure. Benjamin has shown the matron a courtesy, and she feels free to draw him to one side:

"Young man, I am concern'd for thee, as thou hast no friend with thee, and seems not to know much of the world, or of the snares youth is exposed to; depend upon it, these are very bad women; I can see it in all their actions; and if thee art not upon thy guard, they will draw thee into some danger; they are strangers to thee, and I advise thee, in a friendly concern for thy welfare, to have no acquaintance with them."

Franklin thanks her and promises to take her advice.



WILLIAM FRANKLIN, FIRST BORN SON OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

HE BECAME THE ROYAL GOVERNOR OF NEW JERSEY. THIS REPRODUCTION IS FROM A CRAYON DRAWING BY ALBERT ROSENTHAL OF A PAINTED PORTRAIT WHICH ORIGINALLY HUNG IN THE PHILADELPHIA LIBRARY.

He does not deny that he is ignorant of the world; he says nothing of having written an essay betraying much knowledge of the habits of the nymphs on Boston Common at night.

When the ship reaches New York, the two lady friends give him their address and invite him to come to see them. Benjamin refrains. Virtue is rewarded. The next day the two girls are arrested on a charge of stealing a silver spoon and other things from the captain's "cabbin," are convicted and punished — doubtless severely. The theft of property in these days is regarded as all but equivalent to murder.

Benjamin draws a breath of relief. He compares his escape to the close scrape, during the voyage, of the ship over a sunken rock. For comparison of similes, see the letter of Madame Brillon to Benjamin Franklin, statesman, quoted in our first chapter.

"Franklin," says the worthy James Parton, one of the earliest and most devoted of Franklin biographers, "with all his great understanding and good heart, was not able long to preserve that unconceivably precious treasure of man and woman, as precious to man as to woman, sexual integrity. But we are permitted to infer that at eighteen he was still virtuous."

IV

However, as a result of the voyage, Benjamin makes one distinguished friend. The Governor of New York, and of New Jersey as well, is William Burnet, a genial book-lover who is something of a character. His method of examining an applicant for a clergyman's license, John Bigelow informs us, is to give him a text, hand him a Bible, and then lock him in a room. If in a stated time the applicant does not produce a sermon to the governor's taste, he receives no license.

Burnet hears from the captain of the sloop about Benjamin's many books. He sends for Benjamin, shows him his library, converses with him at length about books and authors, and treats him with the utmost courtesy. "This was the second governor," writes Franklin with pride, "who had done me the honor to take notice of me; which, to a poor boy like me, was very pleasing."

Yet a little while, Benjamin, and you shall stand not only before governors but before kings. And they will be proud to know you. They will enjoy your poise and independence, your sententious wit, and the flavorous observations which already season a conversational ability well beyond your eighteen years.

V

In New York Benjamin finds Collins — the clever, brilliant Collins, who has abilities in mathematics which Benjamin, who has flunked his early arithmetic, respects. The lure of New York has been too much for Collins. Drink and gambling have got his money. He is too drunk even to accompany Ben to the house of Governor Burnet. Ben has to pay Collins's board bill and his fare to Philadelphia. On the way they collect the money due Vernon, and Franklin is compelled to dip into this, for Collins finds no work at Philadelphia and lodges there at Ben's expense. The Vernon money becomes a nightmare to Ben, for fear that the owner will suddenly demand it.

One day an incident disposes of Collins forever, much to Benjamin's relief. They and a party of friends are out rowing on the Delaware. On the way home, they take a turn about at the oars. Collins has been drinking and turns ugly. He refuses to take his turn. Ben insists. An argument follows. Collins rises and strikes at him. Ben claps him under the crotch and pitches him into the river. He

then keeps the boat out of Collins's reach until the latter is thoroughly tired. When Collins is lifted back into the boat, he is sullen and refuses to speak. Soon afterward he goes to the Barbadoes as a tutor. Ben never sees him again.

VI

Benjamin, on his return, shows his father's reply to Sir William Keith. The governor is impatient.

"Then I will set you up myself," he says. "Give me an inventory of the things you need and I will send to England for them. I am resolved to have a good printer here."

Benjamin is elated. He is to be his own boss at eighteen! But he cannily says nothing about it to his friends. He is *too* canny. A friend who could tell him about Sir William's numerous unkept promises would have saved him much trouble.

Franklin, full of faith, makes out the inventory. It comes to about one hundred pounds. Sir William approves, and then has another brilliant idea. He proposes that Ben go to England and himself select the equipment. Ben's heart leaps, but he merely says that he thinks "this might be advantageous."

London! Home of Addison and Steele, and *The Spectator*. Residence of philosophers and wits and writers. Capital full of clubs and coffee houses. No, he does not want to go to London. He is perishing to do so.

"Then get yourself ready to go with the Annis," says the Governor.

But the Annis does not sail for several months yet, and Franklin, saying nothing about his impending venture, continues to work for Keimer. Keimer is a man of many erratic notions and loves to argue. He and Franklin have con-

stant disputations, in which the younger man resorts to his trusty Socratic method. Keimer is trapped so often, and is led into so many contradictions, that he grows cautious and finally adopts the policy of asking before answering the most ordinary question:

"*What do you infer from that?*"

Keimer at length comes to have so high an opinion of Ben's debating abilities that one day he proposes they found a new sect. He perhaps purposes thus to capitalize his patriarchal whiskers, which are kept at full length because the Mosaic law has ordered: "Thou shalt not mar the corners of thy beard." Keimer is to indoctrinate the disciples and Franklin is to confound all opponents with his cunning Socratisms.

Benjamin agrees to accept Keimer's main tenets, provided his employer adopts his own doctrine of a meatless diet. Keimer is all for spiritual things, but not so much as that. He doubts if his constitution — he is a huge eater — will bear it. But Ben insists, and Keimer at last agrees.

So for three months they live on dishes in which there is neither fish, flesh nor fowl. Benjamin makes out a list of forty vegetable meals, which are prepared and brought to them by a woman of the neighborhood. The cost is only eighteen pence a week each. Both the economy and the food suit Ben, but Keimer groans in appetite. One day, being sorely tempted, he orders a roast pig. Franklin and two women friends are invited to dine with him. But before they arrive, Keimer sits down and devours the whole animal.

VII

There are other diversions for Benjamin. Since he is living in the same house, Deborah Read finds opportunities to put herself much in his path. She has quite revised her

opinion of the young man with the rolls. Since he has established himself in Philadelphia and won the friendship of influential men, he has lost some of his awkwardness.

Though often fumbling and hesitating he talks with an air of authority that wins the attention of his elders, while the younger folk are delighted with his good humor and sense of fun. Deborah decides he would make a good husband. Benjamin has a "great respect and affection" for her, and finally there is talk of marriage. He tells her his great secret — his impending journey to London. Deborah agrees that it would be nice to write to him, while he is gone, as his wife.

Mrs. Read doesn't think so. Young Franklin is promising, but "a bird in the hand," etc. She counsels her daughter to wait until he is actually set up in business after his return from foreign parts. Besides, they are each only eighteen years old. The young people submit. Deborah wonders why Ben accepts the decision with so little protest.

VIII

Benjamin has meantime found a friend to replace the lost Collins. James Ralph is his name. Ben is first attracted to him because Ralph likes and writes poetry. Ben also finds Ralph to be a brilliant and eloquent talker, but above all he admires his new chum's assured and genteel manners. Franklin, the artisan, is ever fascinated with gentility.

Ralph brings along two other friends, Charles Osborne and Joseph Watson. The four of them form a group which on Sundays strolls into the woods along the Schuylkill. They read aloud from favorite books and tell each other their ambitions.

Ralph announces that one day he is going to quit clerking

for merchants and such cattle, and abandon himself entirely to poetry.

"You can't live on poetry," Osborne remarks.

"I can," says Ralph. "Moreover, I intend to make money out of it. I don't fancy this business of starving in a garret."

Jeers arise, and Osborne, who loves to tell people exactly what he thinks of them, informs Ralph that personally he considers him one of the worst poets that ever lived, and advises him to stick to his clerking job. They all turn to Ben inquiringly.

"I approve the amusing one's self with poetry now and then, so far as to improve one's language," says Franklin weightily, "but no farther."

Further arguments arise. To allay them, Ben proposes that at the next meeting each shall bring a composition which all are to criticize. It is agreed that the piece shall be a version of Psalm XVIII.

This is one of David's songs of deliverance from his enemies, especially Saul. Its best known verse is the second: "The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower."

Ralph comes to Ben one day and announces that his piece is ready. Franklin's is not. The ingenious Ralph then proposes a trick to which Benjamin, with his love for hoaxes, delightedly agrees. Ralph explains that Osborne's habit of fault-finding will never allow him to approve his composition, and so it is arranged that Ben is to offer Ralph's piece as his own.

The meeting takes place. Watson's piece is the first disposed of. Osborne's proves to be better. But when Ben submits his performance, Watson and Osborne admit they are beaten. When Ralph confesses that, for lack of time,

he has done nothing, the contest is unhesitatingly awarded to Benjamin. The only critic is Ralph, who suggests some amendments. But his voice is drowned in the applause of the other two.

Osborne and Ralph walk home together from the meeting. The former, who suspects nothing, tells Ralph in confidence of his surprise at Benjamin's extraordinary performance.

"Who would have imagined," says he, "that Franklin had been capable of such a performance; such painting, such force, such fire! He has even improved the original. In his common conversation he seems to have no choice of words; he hesitates and blunders; and yet, good God! how he writes!"

At the next meeting Ralph reveals to Osborne the trick played on him. Osborne is laughed at and doubtless cured of his hypercritical temper. But one never knows how a practical joke will end. The effect on Ralph is to raise his conceit of himself to the skies, while on Franklin there is to fall a disconcerting penalty.

Watson died a few years later in Franklin's arms, lamented as the best of their set. Osborne went to the West Indies and became rich and famous, but died young. Before his departure it was agreed between him and Franklin that the one who died first was to visit the other and inform him as to conditions in the other world. But Osborne's voice was never heard again from the West Indies, from the heavens, or any other land.

IX

The time for the sailing of the Annis to England now approaches. Governor Keith often invites Ben to his house and discusses with him the outfit that is to be bought in

London. The governor announces that he will give Franklin letters of recommendation to his numerous friends on the other side, also a letter of credit. For these Ben calls several times, but they are not ready.

At last, sailing day comes. Ben calls on the governor to take leave and to receive the letters. A secretary regretfully informs Franklin that His Excellency is busy — "in conference," no doubt, but will see him at Newcastle before the ship sails.

Ben hurriedly says good-by to friends, has a final hour with Debby Read and exchanges with her some promises. Then, with fifteen pistoles and a few curios in his pocket, he boards the ship. Here he gets a decided surprise. On the deck he finds Ralph, all dressed up for a trip. Ralph informs him that he is going to London too — to write poetry. It is not until later that Ralph discloses the fact that he is deserting his wife.

The ship stops at Newcastle. There Ben makes a final call at Governor Keith's house. Again the governor is "in conference." But the exceedingly civil secretary assures him the necessary letters will be sent on board before the ship sails. Franklin, puzzled but believing, returns to the ship. Anchor is weighed. The ship heads for the Capes. So begins the first voyage to London.

X

Ben and Ralph have to be content with the steerage. The first class cabin is occupied by more prosperous passengers. Among them is Mr. Denham, a Quaker merchant. There is also Andrew Hamilton, a famous Philadelphia lawyer, and his son. Ben also discovers on board the presence of Colonel French, who recognizes him and invites him and Ralph into the more comfortable great cabin.

Numb. XL.

THE Pennſylvania *GAZETTE.*

Containing the freſheſt Advices Foreign and Domeſtick

From Thurſday, September 25. to Thurſday, October 2. 1729.

THE Pennſylvania Gazette *being now to be carry'd on by other Hands, the Reader may expect ſome Account of the Method we deſign to proceed in.*

Upon a View of Chambers's *great Dictionaries, from whence were taken the Materials of the* Univerſal Inſtructor in all Arts and Sciences, *which uſually made the Firſt Part of this Paper, we find that beſides their containing many Things abſtruſe or inſignificant to us, it will probably be fifty Years before the Whole can be gone thro' in this Manner of Publication. There are likewiſe in thoſe Books continual Refereuces from Things under one Letter of the Alphabet to thoſe under another, which relate to the ſame Subject, and are neceſſary to explain and compleat it; theſe taken in their Turn may perhaps be Ten Years diſtant; and ſince it is likely that they who deſire to acquaint themſelves with any particular Art or Science, would gladly have the whole before them in a much leſs Time, we believe our Readers will not think ſuch a Method of communicating Knowledge to be a proper One.*

However, tho' we do not intend to continue the Publication of thoſe Dictionaries in a regular Alphabetical Method, as has hitherto been done; yet as ſeveral Things exhibited from them in the Courſe of theſe Papers, have been entertaining to ſuch of the Curious, who never had and cannot have the Advantage of good Libraries; and as there are many Things ſtill behind, which being in this Manner made generally known, may perhaps become of conſiderable Uſe, by giving ſuch Hints to the excellent natural Genius's of our Country, as may contribute either to the Improvement of our preſent Manufactures, or towards the Invention of new Ones; we propoſe from Time to Time to communicate ſuch particular Parts as appear to be of the moſt general Conſequence.

As to the Religious Courtſhip, *Part of which has been retail'd to the Publick in theſe Papers, the Reader may be inform'd, that the whole Book will probably in a little Time be printed and bound up by it ſelf; and thoſe who approve of it, will doubtleſs be better pleas'd to have it entire, than in this broken interrupted Manner.*

There are many who have long deſired to ſee a good News-Paper in Pennſylvania; *and we hope thoſe Gentlemen who are able, will contribute towards the making This ſuch. We ask Aſſiſtance, becauſe we are fully ſenſible, that to publiſh a good News-Paper is not ſo eaſy an Undertaking as many People imagine it to be. The Author of a* Gazette *(in the Opinion of the Learned) ought to be qualified with an extenſive Acquaintance with Languages, a great Eaſineſs and Command of Writing and Relating Things cleanly and intelligibly, and in few Words; he ſhould be able to ſpeak of War both by Land and Sea; be well acquainted with Geography, with the Hiſtory of the Time, with the ſeveral Intereſts of Princes, and States, the Secrets of Courts, and the Manners and Cuſtoms of all Nations. Men thus accompliſh'd are very rare in this remote Part of the World; and it would be well if the Writer of theſe Papers could make up among his Friends what is wanting in himſelf.*

Upon the Whole, we may aſſure the Publick, that as far as the Encouragement we meet with will enable us, no Care and Pains ſhall be omitted, that may make the Pennſylvania Gazette *as agreeable and uſeful an Entertainment as the Nature of the Thing will allow.*

The Following is the laſt Meſſage ſent by his Excellency Governour *Burnet*, to the Houſe of Repreſentatives *in Boſton.*

Gentlemen of the Houſe of Repreſentatives,

IT is not with ſo vain a Hope as to convince you, that I take the Trouble to anſwer your Meſſages, but, if poſſible, to open the Eyes of the deluded People whom you repreſent, and whom you are at ſo much Pains to keep in Ignorance of the true State of their Affairs. I need not go further for an undeniable Proof of this Endeavour to blind them, than your ordering the Letter of Meſſieurs *Wilks* and *Belcher* of the 7th of *June* laſt to your Speaker to be publiſhed. This Letter is ſaid (in *Page* 1. of your Votes) *to inclose a Copy of the Report of the Lords of the Committee of His Majeſty's Privy Council, with his Majeſty's Approbation and Order thereon in Council*. Yet theſe Gentlemen had at the ſame time the unparallell'd Preſumption to write to the Speaker in this Manner; *You'll obſerve by the Concluſion, what is propoſed to be the Conſequence of your not complying with His Majeſty's Inſtruction* (*the whole Matter to be laid*

THE PENNSYLVANIA GAZETTE

FRONT PAGE OF THE FIRST ISSUE OF FRANKLIN'S PHILADELPHIA NEWSPAPER, SHOWING HIS EXCELLENT TASTE IN CHOICE OF TYPE AND ARRANGEMENT.

Hamilton and son being suddenly recalled to Philadelphia, they quit the ship and leave their berths to the two lads.

The voyage is rough, but the discomfort from rolling seas is smoothed by the oil of conversation with a genial company. The two youths dine agreeably on the stores which Hamilton has left behind. The voyage lasts from November 2, 1724, to December 24, but the fifty-two days are never tedious. Ben, thinking of Ralph and Governor Keith, sometimes wonders at the odd conduct of human beings, but in loyalty dismisses the thought. Eight bells and all's well.

Chapter VII

London and "The Dangerous Time of Youth"

I

FRANKLIN, with the penniless Ralph in tow, arrives in London for the first time in his nineteenth year. The month is foggy old December, but rain and soot fail to darken his rainbow anticipations.

It is only four years since he read the third volume of *The Spectator*, and it is still The Spectator's London. It is a period prolific in poetry, essays, and plays. Pope is being eagerly read. Dryden is dead, but his works grow in esteem. James Thomson comes to London in this same year of 1724, and the next year finds Voltaire there as a visitor. The coffee-houses buzz with the arguments of literary loungers. A fresh brawl between religion and science is gathering. At night the theatres are filled with men-about-town and ladies-about-their-business. The current of the Restoration is still running strong. This to the lads from colonial America is Life. They investigate it, "going," as the *Autobiography* expresses it, "to the plays and other places of amusement." In these days plays and places of resort are very "broad" in character, relying in most cases on the appeal of sex, which was then, as now, being highly exploited. Among the spicy and popular plays of the period are those by Dryden, Wycherly and Congreve. From what we know of Benjamin at this stage, he probably enjoyed them hugely.

II

These lively occupations prevent Franklin from worrying too much about the tremendous fizzle in which his Keith-supported mission has ended.

In the Channel, before landing, the ship's captain had permitted Benjamin to search the mail bag for the letters which Franklin was sure the governor had sent aboard. None bore his name, but he picked out several which, from the handwriting, he thought might be the right ones. One was to a London stationer.

On Franklin's presenting this as coming from Governor Keith the stationer declared he knew no such person. When opened, the letter proved to be from one Riddlesden, known to Ben as a knavish Philadelphia lawyer who had half ruined Deborah Read's father. The stationer refused the letter as coming from a "compleat rascal," and turned away. Franklin, sensing something queer, looked at the other letters. None was from Keith. He had been completely befooled.

In a state of panic, Benjamin went to his friend Denham. The hard-headed merchant quickly completed Franklin's disillusionment regarding the character of the governor. Denham said no one who knew Keith believed anything he promised. Denham particularly enjoyed the joke about a letter of credit. He said Keith had no credit to give.

Here was another dismal moment for Franklin. He was in a foreign land, and not only well-nigh penniless but with his treasured hopes smashed and Ralph dependent on him for every penny.

The cheerful Denham, however, talked to him encouragingly. Denham reminded him that he ought easily to find a job in London as a printer and that when he eventually

returned to America it would be as the possessor of a foreign reputation.

It was characteristic of Franklin that at this stage he at once looked about for a means of carrying out his favorite principle — to do good. One of the supposed letters from Keith disclosed what seemed to be a plot against Hamilton, the lawyer. Keith and Riddlesden were evidently concerned in it. As soon as Hamilton reached London, Benjamin went to him and told him the story. The lawyer thanked Ben heartily and later proved his gratitude to him on many occasions.

III

Franklin's next step is to get a job. It is not easy for a colonial to do this in the metropolis, but Ben soon finds work at Palmer's printing house in Bartholomew Close.

The airy Ralph declines to stoop to trade. He fancies the stage and tries to get Wilkes, the comedian, to take him into his company as an actor. Next he offers to write for a publisher a weekly paper like *The Spectator*. This sounds like Franklin's suggestion, but it doesn't work. Ralph then peddles his services as a "hackney writer," but finally relapses into idle brooding. One thing Ralph tells Ben he is decided on, and that is he is not going to return to Philadelphia.

At this time a London printer who is paid as much as a guinea [1] a week is getting a high wage. It can be imagined then, how small is the sum which Franklin and Ralph must live on. They take lodgings in a street called Little Britain at three shillings and sixpence a week. Benjamin, avid to see all of that London of which he has read so much, spends all his surplus on amusements. He must take Ralph along, of course, so there is nothing put by. Month after month

[1] $5.25.

passes before Benjamin saves enough even for his passage home.

His neglect of Deborah Read is astonishing. He writes her only one letter and that merely hints he is not likely to return soon. This is one of the outstanding "errata" of his life which Franklin afterwards wished he could correct.

The lodgings in Little Britain have one great advantage for Ben. They are next door to the bookshop of one Wilcox, with whom he becomes friendly. Ben makes a deal with Wilcox by which he may take out, read, and return any book. This arrangement delights Ben, and we shall see how well he remembers it.

IV

It is at Palmer's printshop that Franklin, the ever inquisitive, makes one of the first of those practical investigations into the workings of matter which are later to add to his fame. For the first time he sees a wet case of type dried before the fire. He finds the heated type agreeable to work over in cold weather, but an old workman warns him against the practice, saying it will give him the "dangles" — a kind of obscure pain in the hands. Franklin consults Mr. James, a letter founder. James ridicules the notion, contending that the malady is caused by the slovenly habits of the printers in failing to wash their hands of lead particles before eating. "This," Franklin afterwards wrote to Benjamin Vaughan, "appeared to have some reason in it."

It is at Palmer's, too, that Franklin is stimulated to write his first serious philosophical essay. The cause of this is his being employed to set up the second edition of Wollaston's *Religion of Nature Delineated.*

Wollaston was a clergyman whose writings were very popular in English religious circles at that period. He married a rich wife and being thus buttressed, obtained an

abundance of leisure which he devoted to religious-literary composition. The burden of his brief argument was that nature herself laid the basis on which the rules of the Church of England were founded, saying that "the foundation of religion lies in that difference between the acts of men which distinguishes them into good, evil, indifferent."

At the time Franklin was already well soaked in the deistical writings of the period. While busy composing the Reverend Doctor Wollaston's book, he found objections to the author's contentions, and so was provoked to write a rather long pamphlet which he called "A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain," and dedicated it to "Mr. J. R.," this being his still admired companion, James Ralph.

Two quotations will suffice to indicate the trend of the nineteen-year-old author's arguments. (1) God being the First Mover, "We must allow that all things exist now in a Manner agreeable to His Will, and in consequence of that are all equally Good, and therefore equally esteemed by Him." (2) Since Pleasure and Pain are inseparable and balance each other, "Every individual Creature must, in any State of Life, have an equal quantity of each, so that there is not, on that account, any Occasion for a future Adjustment."

In brief, Franklin's contention is that the Creator makes no such distinction between good, evil, and indifferent actions and things as that which Wollaston argued for.

Franklin, contrary to the popular notion, was seldom an original thinker. His ideas were mostly derivative. It is no surprise, then, to find that his essay on "Pleasure and Pain" virtually parallels that of the 183d paper in *The Spectator*, in which pleasure and pain are described as yokefellows.

V

Franklin afterwards condemned his pamphlet as another "erratum," but it has the present effect of raising him in the esteem of Palmer, his employer, who, however, is shocked by some of its arguments. It also brings him to the attention of Doctor Lyons, author of "The Infallibility of Human Judgment." Franklin is the source of great interest and amusement to Lyons, who takes him to a club having its headquarters at The Horns, an ale house in Cheapside, and introduces him to Bernard de Mandeville, the cynical but highly companionable author of "The Fable of the Bees." Lyons also takes Benjamin to a coffee-house, where he meets Doctor Henry Pemberton, philosopher and mathematician. Lyons, thoroughly delighted with the precocious young American, next proposes to take him to Sir Isaac Newton, but the famous scientist is very old, and the meeting never takes place.

Benjamin is now in high feather. It is small wonder that he forgets the provincial little girl back home. He is attracting the attention of influential men. He is received on equal terms by the great. He is treated with respect at the coffee houses frequented by brilliant writers. This is what he has dreamed of. He sees before him a coruscating career. Then falls an unexpected blow. It comes from the man for whom he has done so much — James Ralph. It also results in another serious Franklin "erratum."

VI

Living in the same house with Ben and Ralph at one time was a young woman, a milliner, of lively appearance and conversation. Ralph became intimate with her and was soon allowing her to support him and their child while he waited

for something to turn up. After a while he tired of the ménage and took himself to Berkshire where he taught school to boys at sixpence each a week.

One day Ben got a letter from him, in which Ralph's mistress was recommended to Ben's care. It closed with a request that Ben address him as "Mr. Franklin." The lofty Ralph, not content with taking a good share of Ben's money for months, had now crowned his impudence by taking Ben's name!

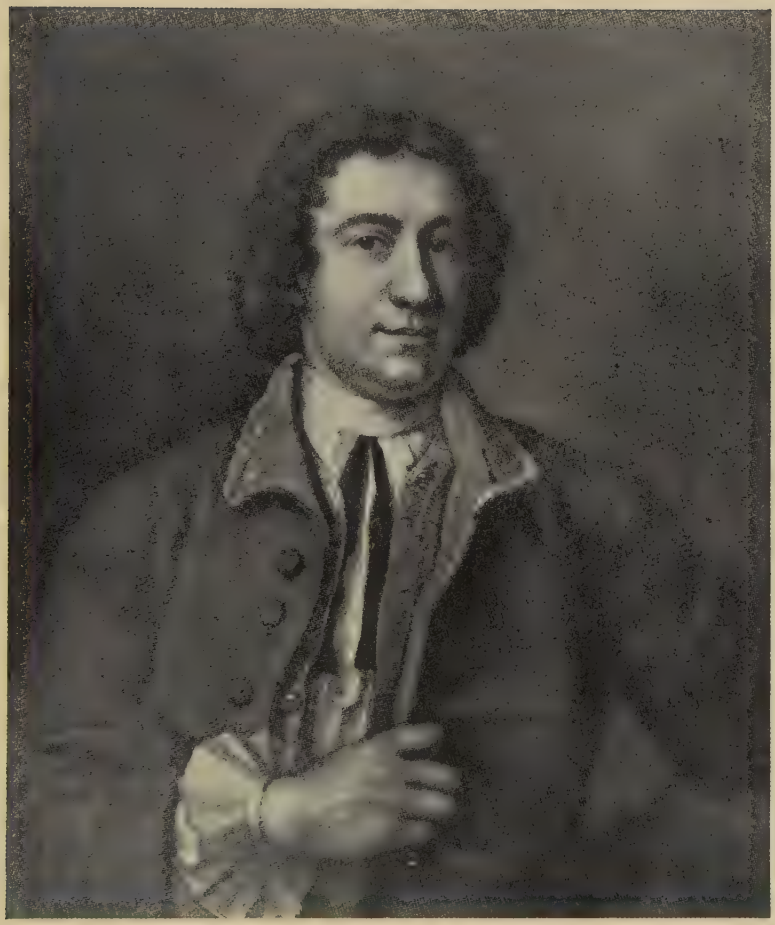
Ben continued to receive letters from Ralph, each containing yard-long extracts from an endless epic poem he was composing. Perhaps this was the very one ridiculed by Pope when he wrote in the "Dunciad":

> "Silence, ye wolves! While Ralph to Cynthia howls
> And makes Night hideous — answer him, ye owls."

Ben tried to scotch Ralph's muse by sending him a copy of Young's Satires, hoping that its ridicule of poetasters would stop the flow of rancid verse. But Ralph continued to draw length after length from the poetical fountain and send them to Ben by every post.

The woman whom Ralph has discarded now in her turn becomes abjectly dependent on Ben. She no longer has either friends or a business. She lives by borrowing from Franklin. He always gives her what he can spare. She looks on him as a valuable friend. Franklin one day tries to become more to her. Her emphatic repulse shows him that he has erred very decidedly; he has tried to open a door that for him is definitely shut.

The young woman at once carries the story of Franklin's behavior to Ralph. That worthy announces with a hurt dignity, that Franklin has thus cancelled all obligations between them, and that Ben has by this act showed himself unworthy of future friendship.



LORD DE DESPENCER

HIGH PRIEST OF THE " HELL FIRE CLUB," WITH WHOM FRANKLIN REVISED THE ENGLISH PRAYER BOOK.

Thus does a second idol of Benjamin's fall face forward in the mud. Ralph has gone the way of Collins. In the *Autobiography* Franklin dismisses the incident as one bringing a good riddance; nevertheless it probably causes a shock, for we find him suddenly seeking a new job, changing his lodgings, and raising money by selling an asbestos purse, brought from America as a curiosity, to Sir Hans Sloane, founder of the British Museum.

VII

Benjamin next finds work as a pressman at the much larger printing house of Watts's, near Lincoln's Inn Fields, not far from the spot where now stands Bush House, the centre of American business life in London. Here Franklin pulls himself together, resumes the simple life, and is soon living serenely again, with enough incidents occurring to make existence varied and interesting.

He at once arouses the wonder and admiration of his fellow workmen by his feats of strength in carrying a large form of type up and down stairs in either hand. They carry but one in both hands. Benjamin boasts that his strength comes from his habit of drinking only water. He is instantly dubbed the "Water-American." Printers in all countries and in all ages have ever entertained a weakness for beer. Those at Watts's are a particularly thirsty lot.

"My companion at the press," writes Franklin,[2] "drank every day a pint before breakfast, a pint at breakfast with his bread and cheese, a pint between breakfast and dinner, a pint at dinner, a pint in the afternoon about six o'clock, and another when he had done his day's work. I thought it a detestable custom; but it was necessary, he suppos'd, to

[2] Autobiography.

drink *strong* beer that he might be *strong* to labor." Ben tried to convince him that the strength derived from beer lay only in its grain content, and that there was more actual strength in a pennyworth of bread with water. But Englishmen do not so readily surrender their beer; and this one went on with his "muddling liquor."

VIII

In a few weeks Ben is transferred from Watts's press room to the composing room. Here takes place another struggle of individual *vs.* group.

On Ben's entry into the new department, the men demand of him, as a newcomer, five shillings in order, no doubt, to "wet the baby's head." Ben, having paid below, refuses the tax. In this Watts backs him up. Ben is promptly excommunicated. His type is mixed up and pied, his pages are transposed, annoying accidents occur. On his complaining, the men say it is doubtless the chapel ghost at work, there being a very troublesome one in those parts. This goes on for two or three weeks, and then Ben gives in, "convinced of the folly of being on ill terms with those one is to live with continually."

Once restored to favor, Ben soon gains considerable influence among the printers, and even brings about some changes in the chapel laws.[3] He sets up a propaganda against beer for breakfast and gains patrons for his own favorite meal consisting of a porringer of hot water-gruel, nicely peppered and buttered. Its cost is the same as the price of a pint of beer — three halfpence.

He does not object to lending money to patrons of the ale house, but he charges them interest on all loans and is

[3] All the workers in the various departments of a printing house form a "chapel."

regularly present at the pay table on Saturday nights to make his collections.

His good humor and jocular abilities earn him the title of "riggite"; he is promoted to the faster and better paid work; and is soon living the cheerful life again.

IX

He now finds a more convenient lodging in Duke Street. The house is kept by a widow, who, before accepting him, "inquires his character" back in Little Britain. Satisfied, she takes him in at the same rate, 3s. 6d. a week. She is incautious enough to remark that it is worth something to have a reliable man in the house. This admission costs her something, for on Ben's talking of another and cheaper place, she lowers her rate to one shilling and sixpence per week.[4] At that price Ben remains for the rest of his stay in London. Let us hope it is with a clear conscience. Beating a lone widow down from 3/6 to 1/6 a week would seem to be poor business for a healthy young journeyman to engage in, and we might not excuse him did we not know that he is desperately saving money for his passage home.

For such a sum the widow not only lodges him but assists his education. She has been a clergyman's daughter, once knew distinguished people, and can tell anecdotes of them as far back as the gay reign of Charles II. She is glad to have Ben's company in the evening, being lame with the gout, and Ben, thirsty for such stories and being no longer given to running around o' nights, is glad to sit with her. They dine on half an anchovy each, with a strip of bread and butter, and split a half pint of ale to wash it down. But the old lady's thousand and one days among

[4] About 37 cents.

the great are more interesting to Ben than more substantial food. He listens eagerly, absorbing every detail and storing them away in his capacious memory.

The mistress of the house is not the only quaint character there, nor is hers the only economical supping. In the garret lives a fragile old lady, a maiden of seventy. She was once the inhabitant of a nunnery on the Continent, but being English, she was never quite at home there. And so she returned to London, choosing this garret in which to live out the rest of her nun's life. She has given all her money to charity, reserving only twelve pounds [5] a year to live on. Out of this sum she continues to give to charity, and lives on water-gruel only, never having a fire even in the bleakest weather except to boil it with. Her room contains only a mattress, a table with a crucifix and book, a stool, and a picture of Saint Veronica. Ben learns with interest that, though pale, she is never sick. This confirms him in the belief that life and health can be maintained on very little money.

A priest visits the saint every day to confess her. On being asked what she could possibly have to confess, she replied with spirit:

"Oh, it is impossible to avoid vain thoughts!"

Thus does Ben learn that no one wishes to be deemed wholly good, and that even saints take a pride in having within them at least a dash of ungodliness.

X

A temptation now comes upon Ben to abandon his steady job and seek adventures elsewhere. A fellow workman is one Wygate, an intelligent fellow who speaks French and loves books. He and Ben become friends. One day, dur-

[5] About $60.

ing a stroll, they find themselves at the Thames. Ben, the Water-American, has a swim and shows Wygate a few tricks learned in early Boston days. Wygate looks on admiringly and later tells some friends about the young American's edifying feats. They can't wait till they have taken Ben out to Chelsea, then a village well separated from the city of London, and challenged him to swim to Blackfriars. Ben, smiling a secret smile, calmly strips, plunges in, and easily covers the whole four miles, probably landing where Blackfriars Bridge now stands, a stone's throw from Ludgate Circus. Moreover, he exhibits his strength and cleverness on the way by various floating and diving tricks.

Wygate is enchanted. He immediately engages Ben to teach him how to swim and then proposes that together they tour Europe, financing themselves by giving swimming lessons. Ben, a little puffed up, almost agrees, but first mentions the matter to his friend Denham.

Denham will not hear of the notion. He tells Ben that he himself has something for him to do back in Philadelphia. Benjamin is at once all ears. He has tired of London and its loneliness. He is still a little dispirited from the Keith and Ralph incidents. He wants to be back in the simple town where he feels he belongs — Philadelphia. He rejoices when he hears that Denham purposes to make him his chief clerk in a new store there. Denham enlarges his proposals. As soon as Franklin is well versed in accounting, he is to go to the West Indies with a cargo of flour and bread and embark upon a profitable commission business.

Ben at once accepts the salary of fifty pounds a year, quits the printing house, and sets about buying and packing goods for Denham. But before he sails, once more he is sent for by one of those great men whose interest Ben is always exciting. Sir William Wyndham, bearer of a historic English name, asks him please to come and teach swimming to

his two sons, who are about to travel abroad. Franklin again hesitates, but resolutely declines. He knows by now that he had rather jump upon a counter in Philadelphia than upon any throne in Europe.

He has spent a year and a half in London, made some valuable acquaintances, received several grievous shocks, widened his knowledge of the world, and recorded some more "errata." When on July 23, 1726, he turns his round face once more toward his own country, he is still only an obscure and unsuccessful young workman. If he has a moment of depression on this account, Fortune doubtless smiles at him, as we smile at the temporary disasters suffered by a hero of the stage or film. Well does Fortune know the important state in which he will return.

Philad.a July 5. 1775

Mr Strahan,

You are a Member of Parliament, and one of that Majority which has doomed my Country to Destruction. — You have begun to burn our Towns, and murder our People. — Look upon your Hands! — They are stained with the Blood of your Relations! — You and I were long Friends: — You are now my Enemy, — and

I am,

Yours,

B Franklin

FRANKLIN'S TERSE LETTER TO HIS OLD FRIEND, WILLIAM STRAHAN, IN LONDON, BREAKING OFF RELATIONS

THE LETTER WAS NEVER ACTUALLY SENT.

Chapter VIII

First Studies of Men and Things

I

ON the voyage home, which lasts eighty days, Franklin sets himself a task betraying that a subtle change, long gathering, has come over him. He begins a diary. It records not only the state of his mind and feelings, but the external things of the matter-of-fact world in which he has now chosen to live.

Metaphysics has heretofore had no little fascination for him. He has at times been occupied with internal searchings and has concerned himself with the old human problem: Why am I here, and what is it all about? He no longer asks himself this question. He accepts the fact that he exists, and that he must find the means to maintain and promote that existence.

He becomes an "extrovert" — his gaze is turned from himself outward to other men and things.

II

The diary begins at Gravesend, the Thames port, which is described as "a cursed biting place." Off Portsmouth he hears of a dungeon into which the Queen's soldiers have been thrown for the most trifling offenses and partly starved. He writes down this observation:

"I own, indeed, that if a commander finds he has not those qualities in him that will make him beloved by his people, he ought, by all means, to make use of such meth-

ods as will make them fear him, since one or the other (or both) is absolutely necessary; but Alexander and Caesar, those renowned generals, received more faithful service, and performed greater actions, by means of the love their soldiers bore them, than they could possibly have done, if, instead of being beloved and respected, they had been hated and feared by those they commanded."

This is one of the earliest expressions from Franklin the humanitarian. We have seen that he is not an orthodox religionist and we shall have evidence later that he is not sure of the divinity of Jesus; but already he has chosen that better part; he means to be loved and respected rather than hated and feared.

Entry by entry that plan of life, which he says was "pretty faithfully adhered to quite thro' old age," begins to take shape. For example, here is an observation written after a game of draughts, or checkers, which he played one whole afternoon:

"Persons playing, if they would play well, ought not much to regard the *consequences* of the game, for that diverts and withdraws the attention of the mind from the game itself . . . I will venture to lay it down for an infallible rule that, if two persons *equal* in judgment, play for a considerable sum, he that loves money shall lose . . . If the player imagines himself opposed by one that is much his superior in skill, his mind is so intent on the defensive part, that an advantage passes unobserved."

Other canny reflections are provoked by the punishment of a passenger who cheated at cards. A Dutchman testified that the accused marked the cards in his presence. Ben accounted for this as follows:

"I have sometimes observed, that we are apt to fancy the person that cannot speak intelligibly to us, proportionately stupid in understanding, and, when we speak two or three

words of English to a foreigner, it is louder than ordinary, as if we thought him deaf, and that he had lost the use of his ears as well as his tongue. Something like this I imagine might be the case of Mr. G——; he fancied the Dutchman could not see what he was about, because he could not understand English, and therefore boldly did it before his face."

The prisoner was sentenced to be lashed to the round top, in the view of all, and fined two bottles of brandy. On his refusing to pay, Ben and others hoisted him up, cursing and swearing, and let him hang till he was black in the face. He was then brought down, but all passengers agreed not to speak to him until he paid his fine. The victim held out for a time, but on the sixth day gave in.

Ben, the mixer, no doubt remembering his experience with Watts's printers, confided this to his journal:

"Man is a sociable being, and it is, for aught I know, one of the worst of punishments to be excluded from society. I have read abundance of fine things on the subject of solitude, and I know 'tis a common boast in the *mouths* of those that affect to be thought wise, *that they are never less alone than when alone.* I acknowledge solitude an agreeable refreshment to a busy mind; but, were these thinking people obliged to be always alone, I am apt to think they would quickly find their very being insupportable to them."

The natural philosopher as well as the moralist now begins to show himself in the twenty-year-old Benjamin. There are numerous entries in the journal dealing with marine life as observed from the ship's deck and phenomena such as eclipses. He imprisons an infant crab in a glass phial that he may study its protecting shell and draw conclusions as to its likeness to silkworms and butterflies.

III

He also records certain rules which are to govern his future conduct. He confesses that he has "never fixed a regular design in life, by which means it has been a confused variety of different scenes." He therefore begins with the following:

"1. It is necessary for me to be extremely frugal for some time, till I have paid what I owe.

"2. To endeavor to speak truth in every instance, to give nobody expectations that are not likely to be answered, but aim at sincerity in every word and action; the most amiable excellence in a rational being.

"3. To apply myself industriously to whatever business I take in hand, and not to divert my mind from my business by any foolish project of growing suddenly rich; for industry and patience are the surest means of plenty."

A few days before landing he witnesses one of the first signs of the Irish invasion of America. It is the "Snow" from Dublin, with some fifty young men and women aboard who are going to enter service in New York.

He cannot see the land when the lookout first hails it. His eyes are dimmed with "two drops of joy." The date is October 11, 1726. The last entry in the diary says: "Thank God!"

Chapter IX

Franklin Begins to Find Himself

I

IN eighteen months Benjamin could not have expected to find Philadelphia much changed. Nevertheless the town had grown; immigrants were arriving steadily; the Quaker colony was expanding; new houses and shops were being built; and a burgher class of small business men was making itself felt. Among the urban population there was much talk of money, and the need for making it, saving it, and thereby becoming the head of one's own business. The respectable virtues of thrift, economy, time-saving, and industry were becoming popular, as a middle class began to arise out of elements contributed to the town by the farming population and the more enterprising artisans.

There were visible, as Franklin noted, other "sundry alterations." The facile Governor Keith had been deposed. He hung his head when Franklin passed him on the street one day, and pretended not to see the credulous youth to whom he had proposed such grandiose schemes. For this Ben did not care, but the news concerning Deborah Read was quite a blow to him. The once blooming Debby was keeping herself in seclusion. While the false and festive Ben was disporting himself in London, she had married a potter named Rogers, but had left him when she had discovered he was some one else's husband and that he was a sorry fellow, anyhow. Rogers got into debt, fled to the West Indies, and died there. Debby was therefore a widow.

Ben, however, suppressed the pang in his conscience and busied himself with mercantile pursuits. He helped Denham open his store, became his book-keeper, and perfected himself in the arts of salesmanship. Under Denham's paternal care he might in time have become the revered founder of a great American department store, had not destiny again interfered.

II

Ben was just twenty-one years old when both he and Denham were taken severely ill. Denham died, leaving a small legacy to the faithful Benjamin, but the business went into other hands.

Ben's malady was pleurisy. He sank to the point of death, and so great was his pain and weakness that he was, as he afterwards remarked, disappointed when he began to recover.

For one of Franklin's hopeful temperament this is a remarkable confession. It means that he was sick of life and had no heart to go on with it. Reading between the lines of his autobiography, it is apparent that this sickness was as much mental as physical. His misfortunes had accumulated until their weight hung heavy. Five years of hard work had brought him nowhere. He had appropriated Vernon's money to his own use. Collins and Ralph, his two dearest friends, had dealt with him treacherously. Governor Keith had played a monkeyish trick on him. He had neglected Deborah Read and caused her to plunge into a wretched marriage. His anxious months in London had been, as far as he could see, a mere waste of time. Though he had at times earned good wages, he had saved nothing. Every dream had burst into a vaporous sprinkle. Perhaps, after all, the folks back home had been right. He thought of re-

turning to Boston and saying to Josiah, "Father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

He cast his mind back over his past, and resolved, as most very sick men do, to reform. He now regretted the deistical teachings which had "perverted" Collins and Ralph, and wished he could recall his London pamphlet, doubting "whether some error had not insinuated itself unperceiv'd" into his argument, "so as to infect all that follow'd, as is common in metaphysical reasonings." That he had come through "this dangerous time of youth" at all, he now thought might be due to a guardian Providence, preserving him, as he afterwards wrote, from "the hazardous situations I was sometimes in among strangers, remote from the eye and advice of my father, without any willful gross immorality or injustice, that might have been expected from my want of religion."

Bigelow calls attention to the fact that at this point in the Franklin memoirs, the following addendum was effaced in the revision:

"Some foolish intrigues with low women excepted, which from the expense were rather more prejudicial to me than to them."

The narrative then resumes:

"I say willful, because the instances I have mentioned had something of necessity in them, from my youth, inexperience, and the knavery of others."

It was while in this chastened frame of mind that Ben wrote one of the few of his early letters that have been preserved. It was to his young sister Jane, then entering upon a charming young-ladyhood. It reads more like the pious admonitions of a Dutch uncle than a note from a youth who has only recently been "seeing" London. Mentioning that he has selected a gift for her, Ben writes:

"I had almost determined on a tea-table; but when I considered that the character of a good housewife was far preferable to that of being only a pretty gentlewoman, I concluded to send you a *spinning-wheel*, which I hope you will accept as a small token of my sincere love and affection. Sister, farewell, and remember that modesty, as it makes the most homely virgin amiable and charming, so the want of it infallibly renders the most perfect beauty disagreeable and odious. But when that brightest of female virtues shines among the other perfections of body and mind in the same person, it makes the woman more lovely than an angel. Excuse this freedom, and use the same with me. I am, dear Jenny, your loving brother."

Jenny was a dear, good little body. No doubt she wrote a dutiful letter of sober thanks to her big brother from abroad. And then made a face. A spinning wheel!

III

While Benjamin is thus low in his mind, an angel appears. A whiskered one. It is — of all persons — the pig-eating Keimer!

The pig-eater, carried along by the sheer current of the town's growth, has prospered despite his own foolishness. He has a new establishment with several employees and has also opened a stationery shop. He comes, full of oily smiles, and offers Ben at large wages the management of his printery, so that he can look after this shop.

Ben is not inclined to have any more to do with Keimer, but since he is penniless and fails to find a job elsewhere, he accepts. It soon becomes evident that Keimer means to have Franklin train his raw hands and then dispense with him. However, Ben puts Keimer's house in order and teaches his men what he knows. Among them is Hugh Meredith,

honest son of a Welsh farmer but fond of taverns. He at once admires Ben's pluck and capacity.

Ben finds more and more work laid on his shoulders. There is no such thing as a type-founder in America, so he becomes the first. He makes a mould, contrives the matrix, and produces enough type to make up for damaged and missing letters. He also tries his hand at engraving, and even makes the ink.

IV

Meantime, Ben, the gregarious, had launched one of the most celebrated of his numerous achievements — the Junto Club.

Its purpose was to seek truth, promote good fellowship, and realize the benefits of occasional wine and song. Ben drew up the rules. It met on Friday evenings. Every member was expected to produce, in turn, "one or more queries on any point of Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy, to be discuss'd by the company; and once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing on any subject he pleased." Expressions of positiveness in opinions or direct contradiction were fined. Disputation and mere desire for victory were barred.

The Junto was a success from the first and a source of immense delight to Franklin. It endured for almost forty years and was the mother of a numerous progeny of similar associations. It educated its members, made them tolerant, and vastly improved their conversation. In brief, it was a molder of civilized men.

Its first eleven members were all, like Franklin, workingmen, except Robert Grace, "a young gentleman of some fortune, generous, lively, and witty" — a type for which Franklin had a worshipful admiration; William Coleman, then a merchant's clerk, later a judge, and for two-score

years Franklin's close friend; and Thomas Godfrey, of whom it was soon evident that he had got into the wrong pew. Godfrey was an able mathematician and an unendurable precisian, "forever denying or distinguishing upon trifles." His membership was brief. There was also Joseph Breintnal, a scrivener who loved poetry and was "very ingenious in little nicknackeries." We shall hear more of Godfrey and Breintnal.

There has been some disagreement among students of Frankliniana as to whence Benjamin derived the plan of the Junto. Some think he got it from Cotton Mather's scheme for a series of benefit societies in Boston. But it is more likely that he drew on other sources. It has already been revealed that Ben was a reader of John Locke, whose *Essay on the Human Understanding* grew out of discussions among friends of the philosopher who met informally; that Ben has admired the coffee-house clubs of London, and above all, that his model, Sir Roger de Coverley, was the leading spirit of that club whose doings are so often described in *The Spectator*.

Some of the queries submitted at meetings of the Junto, with "a pause between each while one might fill and drink a glass of wine," were:

"How may smoky chimneys best be cured?"

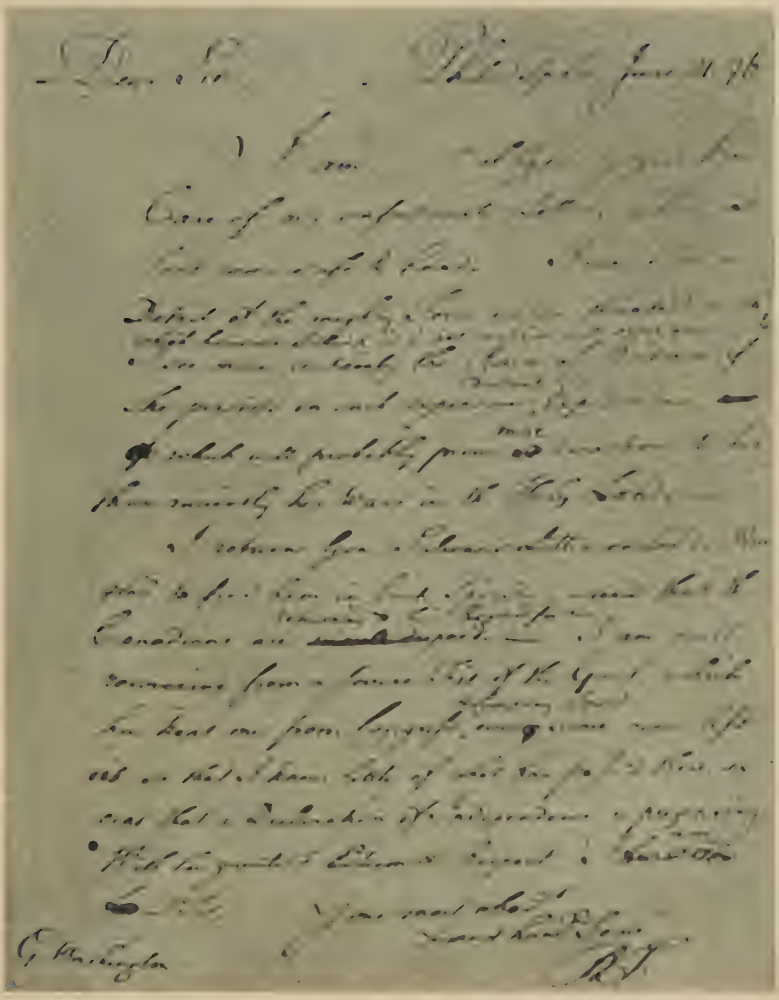
"Why are tumultuous, uneasy sensations united with our desires?"

"Can any one particular form of government suit all mankind?"

"Whether it ought to be the aim of philosophy to eradicate the passions?"

"Have you lately observed any encroachment on the just liberties of the people?"

"What new story have you lately heard agreeable for telling in conversation?"



DRAFT OF A LETTER FROM FRANKLIN TO GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

IN WHICH HE SENDS WORD THAT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IS BEING PREPARED.

From the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library.

"Have you lately heard of any citizens thriving well, and by what means? "

"Why does the flame of a candle tend upward in a spire? "

"Hath any deserving stranger arrived in town since last meeting, that you have heard of? And what have you heard or observed of his character or merits? And whether, think you, it lies in the power of the Junto to oblige him, or encourage him as he deserves? "

"Do you think of anything at present, in which the Junto may be serviceable to *mankind*, to their country, or to themselves? "

These queries are worth a second reading, disclosing as they do the fine American hand of Franklin himself and evidencing the very problems with which Benjamin is most concerned.

An extra query: Did Franklin form the Junto with the unconscious purpose of perhaps finding an answer to the questions which most frequently troubled *him?*

V

The end of six months found Keimer growing peevish with Benjamin. He began to complain about Ben's high wages and hinted that he thought Ben ought to be content with less. He found fault with his work and became daily more overbearing in his attitude. Ben saw through this; he realized that the thoroughness with which he was teaching Keimer's men was making him more and more dispensable.

One day there was a noise near the Philadelphia courthouse. Ben put his head out of the window and met the glowering eye of Keimer, who was in the street below. Keimer bawled out:

"Mind your own business, and you'll find less to look at outside."

He then came raging upstairs and continued his abuse. Ben, who at times had a temper of his own, replied belligerently. The row ended in Ben's being discharged. Keimer gave him three months' notice but wished aloud that he had not to give him so long a warning. Ben promptly carried out that which is the darling wish at one time or another of every man who is working for an inflated employer: he put on his hat and walked out.

As he did so he caught the sympathetic eye of Hugh Meredith. He asked Meredith to collect his things and bring them to his lodgings.

VI

Once more Ben is out of a job and "broke." Though he has had comparatively high wages for six months, he has saved barely enough to live on for a few days. He has paid none of Vernon's money back. He tries in a disheartened way to find another place, but there is no opening. His four years of absence from home have registered nothing but failure after failure. He again thinks of returning to Boston.

In the evening comes Meredith, who scouts the idea. Keimer, he says, is almost at the end of his rope, in debt, and being pressed by creditors. If Ben will stick, there will be room for another printer in Philadelphia soon. Ben pleads lack of capital.

Meredith then proposes a scheme he has had in mind. He tells Ben that his father knows about him, admires him, and is willing to put up the money for a partnership between his son and Franklin.

"I'm no good as a printer," says Meredith, "but you furnish the skill and I the stock, and we'll share equally."

Ben is so cheered by this hopeful prospect, coming at

such a moment, that he at once agrees. Meredith takes him to his father, and the deal is arranged. The old man tells Ben that he welcomes the opportunity to help a young fellow who has done so much to break his son of his habit of drinking. Gaily they all make out a list of things needed, which are to be ordered from London. By the time they arrive, Meredith's apprenticeship to Keimer will have expired and the new printery can then open. Meantime Benjamin is to find work until the time comes to make the announcement.

But Ben is compelled to remain idle for several days. Again appears the knavish Keimer. He has heard that New Jersey is about to give out a big order for printed paper money, and since Ben is the only man in town who can make engravings and found types, Keimer is a-tremble lest Bradford engage him for the job. Keimer thinks it too bad that old friends should part because of a trifling misunderstanding, lauds Ben's ability, and offers to kiss and make up. Meredith urges Ben to accept, since it will give them time to make their preparations.

So once more Ben returns to Keimer, who is now all respect and affection. They go to Burlington and get the job. Ben makes a copper-plate press for it, the first in America, and cuts the ornaments and checks. The job so pleases the Jerseymen that they pay Keimer enough to keep him going for some time, and the pig-eater's affection for his discharged employee returns in doubled strength.

Though Keimer gets all the money, Ben gets something of more lasting value. He meets many public men, who foresee a future for the bright young man. They invite him to their houses and introduce him around, but pay little attention to Keimer.

"My mind," says Franklin modestly, "having been much more improv'd by reading than Keimer's, I suppose

it was for that reason my conversation seem'd to be more valu'd."

In the spring, Franklin being twenty-two years old, the press and types arrive from London. Ben and Hugh part on friendly terms with Keimer, but say nothing about the new firm of Franklin and Meredith. It is a glad spring for Benjamin. The clouds are being carried off on the shoulders of a fairer wind and he begins to see the blue.

Chapter X

A Young Man States His Creed of Life

I

IN 1728 Franklin is still dissatisfied with the religions with which he is acquainted, "every . . . sect supposing itself in possession of all truth," he wrote, "and that those who differ are so far in the wrong; like a man traveling in foggy weather; those at some distance before him on the road he sees wrapped up in the fog, as well as those behind him, and also the people in the fields on each side; but near him all appear clear; though in truth he is as much in the fog as any of them."

It was about this time, he says, that he "conceiv'd the bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection." He is, as we have seen, at work on a plan or design which will guide him through life. The impulse to complete it is probably hastened by his reflections following his recovery from the illness which brought him close to death. He feels the need of a creed which will have more positive and less negative elements than those contained in his "Dissertation" pamphlet written in London. He also wished to avoid "those articles which," as he afterward expressed it, "without any tendency to inspire, promote, or confirm morality, serv'd principally to divide us, and make us unfriendly toward one another."

He therefore begins to draw up a creed of his own and then a liturgy, because he finds innate in man the need of something to worship. Franklin carefully writes it all out in a little pocket-size book entitled "Articles of Belief and

Acts of Religion." He declares that "There is one Supreme most perfect Being, Author and Father of the gods themselves." So far as history records this is the first time that an American has stated his belief in the existence of gods subordinate to the one Deity. He proceeds: "I conceive, then, that the Infinite has created many beings or gods, vastly superior to man, who can better conceive his perfections than we, and return him a more rational and glorious praise; as, among men, the praise of the ignorant or of children is not regarded by the ingenious painter or architect, who is rather honored and pleased with the approbation of wise men and artists. It may be that these created gods are immortal; or it may be that after many ages, they are changed, and others supply their places."

This belief in a God surrounded or attended by subordinate gods is Eastern rather than Western, and to some extent parallels the teachings found in the Indian Vedantas and the Bhagavad Gita. There is no evidence, however, that at this stage young Benjamin has ever dipped into the religious lore of the Orient.

Ben goes on to state that man is happy only so far as he is virtuous, that God delights in virtue, and is pleased with human praise. "Let me not fail, then, to praise my God continually, for it is his due." It is to be noted that Franklin speaks here not simply of God but of "my God."

His liturgy opens with this Prelude: "Being mindful that before I address the Deity, my soul ought to be calm and serene, free from passion and perturbation, or otherwise elevated with rational joy and pleasure, I ought to use a countenance that expresses a filial respect, mixed with a kind of smiling, that signifies inward joy, and satisfaction, and admiration."

Worship that could be conducted with "a kind of smiling" was certainly something new in Franklin's time.

Then follows an Invocation containing these passages:

"O Creator, O Father! I believe that thou art good, and that thou art *pleased with the pleasure* of thy children. — Praised be thy name forever! . . .

"By thy wisdom hast thou formed all things; thou hast created man, bestowing life and reason, and placed him in dignity superior to thy other earthly creatures. — Praised be thy name forever! . . .

"Thou abhorrest in thy creatures treachery and deceit, malice, revenge, intemperance, and every other hurtful vice; but thou art a lover of justice and sincerity, of friendship and benevolence, and every virtue; thou art my friend, my father, and my benefactor. — Praised be thy name, O God, forever. Amen."

The liturgy next provides for readings from Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation, or Blackmore on the Creation, or Cambray's Demonstration on the Being of a God; or for a few moments of silent contemplation. There is to follow the singing of Milton's Hymn to the Creator, and then a reading from a book "discoursing on and exciting the moral virtues."

Next comes a prelude to a litany. It expresses uncertainty that "many things, which we often hear mentioned in the petitions of men to the Deity, would prove real goods, if they were in our possession," and his hope and belief that God will not withhold from him "a suitable share of temporal blessings" if by a virtuous and holy life he conciliates God's favor and kindness. His prayers contain the following petitions:

"That I may be preserved from atheism, impiety, and profaneness; and, in my addresses to Thee, carefully avoid irreverence and ostentation, formality and odious hypocrisy, — Help me, O Father!

"That I may be loyal to my prince, and faithful to my

country, careful for its good, valiant in its defense, and obedient to its laws, abhorring treason as much as tyranny, — Help me, O Father!

"That I may to those above me be dutiful, humble, and submissive; avoiding pride, disrespect, and contumacy, — Help me, O Father.

"That I may to those below me be gracious, condescending, and forgiving, using clemency, protecting innocent distress, avoiding cruelty, harshness, and oppression, insolence, and unreasonable severity, — Help me, O Father!

"That I may refrain from calumny and detraction; that I may abhor and avoid deceit and every fraud, flattery, and hatred, malice, lying and ingratitude, — Help me, O Father!

"That I may be sincere in friendship, faithful in trust, and impartial in judgment, watchful against pride, and against anger (that momentary madness), — Help me, O Father!

"That I may be just in all my dealings, temperate in my pleasures, full of candour and ingenuousness, humanity and benevolence, — Help me, O Father. . .

The litany closes with the following: "That I may have a constant regard to honor and probity, that I may possess a perfect innocence and a good conscience, and at length may become truly virtuous and magnanimous, — Help me, good God; help me, O Father."

II

So, with a little imagination, we can picture the youthful Franklin solemnly beginning the day in his solitary Philadelphia bedroom with a recital of his creed, the singing of his Miltonic hymn, and the intonation of his litany, and then going out, perhaps with a little sigh, to resume his

THE BEST KNOWN PORTRAIT OF FRANKLIN

PAINTED BY J. S. DUPLESSIS IN PARIS AND PRESENTED BY JOHN BIGELOW TO THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY.

labors before a case of cold and smudgy type. But who can contend that Franklin's religion was not, for him, a sound one? Did he not "at length become truly virtuous and magnanimous," and did he not attain a full measure of those "temporal blessings" for which he prayed?

III

To give a more complete statement of Franklin's views concerning religion, it may be well at this stage to insert an extract from his letter to President Ezra Stiles, of Yale College, written when Franklin was eighty-four years old. After stating his belief in God, who may best be served by "doing good to his children," Franklin says:

"As to Jesus of Nazareth, my opinion of whom you particularly desire, I think his system of morals and his religion, as he left them to us, the best the world ever saw or is like to see; but I apprehend it has received various corrupting changes, and I have, with most of the present Dissenters in England, some doubts as to his divinity; though it is a question I do not dogmatize upon having never studied it, and think it needless to busy myself with it now. I expect soon of an opportunity of knowing the truth with less trouble.[1] I see no harm, however, in its being believed, if that belief has the good consequence, as probably it has, of making his doctrines more respected and more observed; especially as I do not perceive that the Supreme takes it amiss, by distinguishing the unbelievers in his government of the world with any particular marks of his displeasure.

"I shall only add, respecting myself, having experienced the goodness of that Being in conducting me prosperously through a long life, I have no doubt of its continuance in

[1] Franklin "knew the truth" very soon; he died a few weeks later.

the next, though without the smallest conceit of meriting such goodness.

"P.S. I confide, that you will not expose me to criticisms and censures by publishing any part of this communication to you. I have ever let others enjoy their religious sentiments, without reflecting on them for those that appeared to me insupportable or even absurd. All sects here, and we have a great variety, have experienced my good will in assisting them with subscriptions for the building their new places of worship; and, as I have never opposed any of their doctrines, I hope to go out of the world in peace with them all."

At another time he wrote:

"With regard to future bliss, I cannot help imagining that multitudes of the zealously orthodox of different sects who at the last day may flock together in hopes of seeing each other damned, will be disappointed and obliged to rest content with their own salvation."

IV

However, Benjamin found some time later "that the mere speculative conviction that it was our interest to be completely virtuous, was not sufficient to prevent our slipping." What he aimed at was not a mere emotional religion for special occasions, but "a steady, uniform rectitude of conduct."

He therefore gave himself up to careful cogitation, and fixed upon thirteen virtues as being "all that at that time occurr'd to me as necessary or desirable." To each he annexed a short precept. These principles were to be the basis of a projected work which was never completed, "the Art of Virtue." The famous thirteen virtues were written down as follows:

1. Temperance

Eat not to dulness; drink not to elevation.

2. Silence

Speak not but what may benefit others or yourself; avoid trifling conversation.

3. Order

Let all things have their places; let each part of your business have its time.

4. Resolution

Resolve to perform what you ought; perform without fail what you resolve.

5. Frugality

Make no expense but to do good to others or yourself; i.e., waste nothing.

6. Industry

Lose no time; be always employ'd in something useful; cut off all unnecessary actions.

7. Sincerity

Use no hurtful deceit; think candidly and justly; and, if you speak, speak accordingly.

8. Justice

Wrong none by doing injuries, or omitting the benefits that are your duty.

9. Moderation

Avoid extremes; forbear resenting injuries so much as you think they deserve.

10. Cleanliness

Tolerate no uncleanliness in body, cloaths, or habitation.

11. Tranquillity

Be not disturbed at trifles, or at accidents common or unavoidable.

12. Chastity

Rarely use venery but for health or offspring; never to dullness, weakness, or the injury of your own or another's face or reputation.

13. Humility

Imitate Jesus and Socrates.

This document supplies a perfect map of the tendencies of Franklin's character. Every man admires or wishes for those things which he has not. It is evident, therefore, that the care with which Franklin selected these thirteen virtues indicates that he was in a much worse plight than Achilles. Achilles had one vulnerable spot — his heel. Franklin had thirteen, and they were rather widely diffused.

He confesses that his precepts were arranged in an ascending scale, conforming to the steps of a ladder. He intended to begin with what he believed to be the easiest, and having attained that, be thus strengthened to proceed to the more difficult.

His list originally ended with Virtue No. 12. Then came along an admonitory Quaker who disturbed whatever

complacency Ben then possessed by informing him that he was "generally thought proud"; that this pride showed itself in Ben's conversation; and that in discussion he was at times "overbearing, and rather insolent." This jolt caused Franklin hastily to append Virtue No. 13.

He was never able, however, to chronicle a victory over this shortcoming, for in 1784, looking back over the vista of fifty years, he was obliged to make in his *Autobiography* this admission:

"I cannot boast of much success in acquiring the *reality* of this virtue, but I had a good deal with regard to the *appearance* of it. I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiments of others, and all positive assertion of my own . . . and to this habit (after my character of integrity) I think it principally owing that I had early so much weight with my fellow-citizens when I proposed new institutions as alterations in the old, and so much influence in public councils when I became a member . . . In reality, there is perhaps, no one of our natural passions so hard to subdue as *pride*. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show himself; you will see it, perhaps, often in this history; for even if I could conceive that I had compleatly overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility."

Sagacious Benjamin! How well you learned that there is no pride so obstinate as that of the meek.

The virtue of Humility was not the only one which gave Franklin a struggle. Says he:

"My scheme of Order gave me the most trouble . . . Order, too, with regard to places for things, papers, etc., I found it extreamly difficult to acquire. I had not been early accustomed to it, and, having an exceedingly good memory, I was not so sensible of the inconvenience attend-

ing want of method . . . In truth, I found myself incorrigible with respect to *order;* and now I am grown old, and my memory bad, I feel very sensibly the want of it." [2]

Nor had he much better success with the other virtues. "I soon found I had undertaken a task of more difficulty than I had imagined. While my care was employ'd in guarding against one fault, I was often surprised by another; habit took the advantage of inattention; inclination was sometimes too strong for reason." [2]

His wrestlings continued until, at length, he decided he must organize his forces better. He therefore adopted a hint from the Golden Verses of Pythagoras, who advised his followers to give themselves a daily examination.

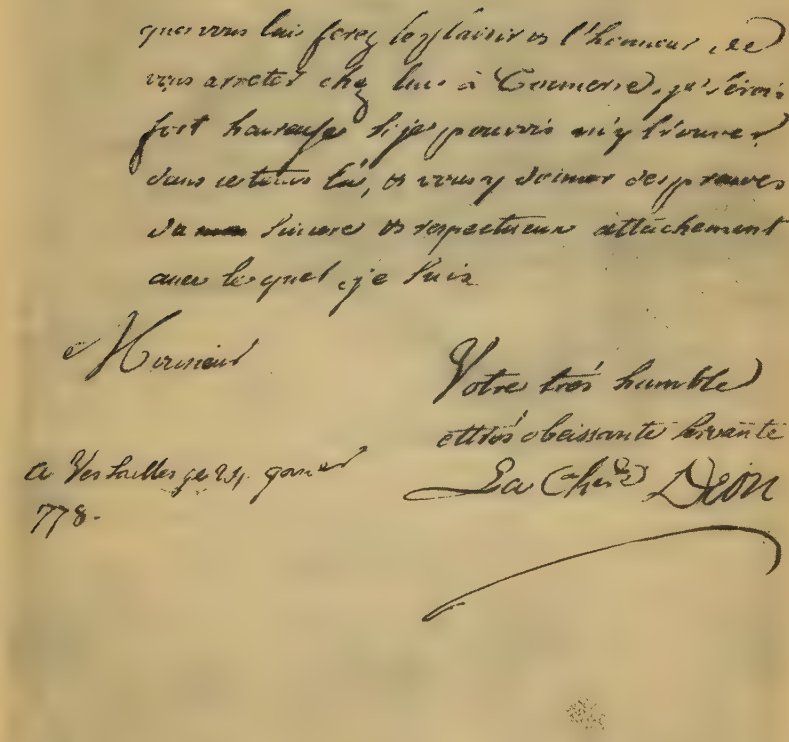
So Ben made himself a little book. Each page he ruled with red ink into seven columns, one for each day of the week. These columns he crossed with thirteen red lines, representing the Thirteen Virtues. His transgressions he indicated by a black spot marked in the proper place each evening before retiring. Firmly resolving to test himself by giving a week's strict attention to each virtue in succession, he began with Temperance.

In the *Autobiography* he gives us a specimen page. It shows that for one week at least, he kept his Temperance record clear. But Silence was interrupted on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Order was overthrown twice on Sunday, and once each on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Resolution received two black entries, on Tuesday and Friday. Frugality was fractured on Monday and Thursday. Industry was low on Tuesday. What happened to Sincerity, Justice, Moderation, Cleanliness, Tranquillity, Chastity and Humility is not recorded at all. Possibly by the time he had reached Industry, the flesh had weakened beyond repair.

[2] Autobiography.

CHEVALIER D' EON

IN THE WOMAN'S CLOTHES HE CHOSE TO WEAR DURING THE LATTER PART OF HIS LIFE.



PAGE OF A LETTER FROM THE FAMOUS CHEVALIER D' EON TO FRANKLIN, WITH SIGNATURE IN THE FEMININE.

Reproduced by permission from the original in the possession of the American Philosophical Society.

The incessant scraping out of the black marks, so as to begin a new course, finally left the little book full of holes. He therefore transferred his tables to a set of ivory leaves, which stood erasures better. In the course of years, his self-tests became more and more infrequent, until at last they ceased entirely.

"But," adds Franklin, "I always carried my little book with me."

He consoled himself with the reflection that, at any rate, he ought not to carry his project of perfect morals to the point of foppery. "A perfect character might be attended with the inconvenience of being envied and hated," and "a benevolent man should allow a few faults in himself, to keep his friends in countenance," says the *Autobiography*.

Franklin errs, perhaps, when he asserts that it was his scheme of Order which gave him the most trouble. For it is of this time that he afterwards wrote:

"That hard to be governed passion of youth had hurried me frequently into intrigues with low women that fell in my way, which were attended with some expense and great inconvenience, besides a continual risk to my health by a distemper, which, of all things, I dreaded, though by great good luck I escaped it."

And it was about a year after the production of his liturgy that his natural son, William Franklin, afterwards the Royal Governor of New Jersey, was born.[3] Who his mother was is not certainly known. Some believe it was a strolling wench. Others have aired the charges of Franklin's enemies, that William's mother was Barbara, a servant girl, afterwards employed in Ben's home. The event is not recorded in Franklin's *Autobiography;* but this is not strange, seeing that the *Autobiography* was originally addressed to William and written for his benefit. Franklin does not

[3] Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin, by James Parton.

mention William's birth in any of his other collected writings, but he took the boy into his home and reared him with fond care. He did the same when William in his turn became the father of a natural son, William Temple Franklin. He loved both boys and tried his best to be proud of them, even when they did not deserve it.

Chapter XI

Philadelphia's Youngest Master-Printer

I

THE first customer for the new printing firm of Franklin and Meredith appeared almost as soon as they had opened their London-bought outfit. He was a countryman fetched by an acquaintance who had found him in the street inquiring for a printer. The job brought five shillings. Franklin says it gave him more pleasure than any crown earned afterwards, and made him the more disposed to help young beginners. The printshop occupied quarters near the old Philadelphia market on High Street, later Market Street. They paid twenty-four pounds a year for it, but eased the burden by subletting rooms to Thomas Godfrey, the meticulous member of the Junto, and his family.

One day a bearded raven stopped at the door. His name was Samuel Mickle, an elderly and prominent citizen. Seeing Benjamin's beaming countenance, he lifted up his voice and began to croak. There was no chance for the new firm to succeed, he said; the recent boom in Philadelphia couldn't last. There was nothing but ruin and desolation to look forward to. He cited at great length a list of recent failures. Then, seeing that he had reduced the hopeful Franklin to a state of misery, he resumed his walk with a satisfied feeling of having done a good day's work.

But the Junto members were already exerting themselves to recommend business to the new firm, and soon Franklin

got a job, low in price but something to go on with. It consisted of forty sheets of a huge folio "History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People called Quakers." Meredith worked the press and Franklin set it up, a sheet a day, often working into the night. He was so determined to do a sheet a day that when by accident a form was pied, he distributed the type and set it up all over again before going to bed.

People began to notice this industry. It was remarked at the Merchants' Every-night Club that Franklin could be seen at work when the members went home at night and again the next morning before they were abroad. At length one member, wishing to reward true merit, offered to sell the firm stationery on credit, but Franklin says they did not "chuse" to open a shop.

II

Now comes George Webb, a former fellow employee at Keimer's, and wants a journeyman's job. Ben says there's nothing at present but there may be later, because he intends to start a newspaper.

At the time the only paper south of New England is Andrew Bradford's *Weekly Mercury*. It once distinguished itself by its defense of the Franklin brothers in their Boston fight, as we have seen; but most of the time, though profitable, it offers dull reading and is besides badly managed.

Webb hurries off to Keimer with the secret. The pig-eater at once sets about founding a paper of his own. The first number appears long before Franklin is ready, on December 24, 1728. It bears the grandiose title of *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences, and Pennsylvania Gazette*. A yearly subscription cost ten shillings. Adver-

tisements were three shillings each. At one time it had as many as ninety subscribers.

Ben, thus forestalled, retaliates upon Keimer by making use of the *Weekly Mercury*. He contributes a series of satiric articles, aimed at Keimer, signed by "The Busybody."

The Busybody papers, as might be expected, are written in the vein of *The Spectator*. They are really a continuation of the "Silence Dogood" essays published in the *New England Courant*, but are better written, because Franklin has developed meantime; and are more broadly humorous in tone, because Ben no longer has in his blood the poison of his hatred for New England's dismal religiosity. In Pennsylvania he is surrounded by a people with whom he is more at home. They are like himself, half peasants, having a leaven supplied by liberal-minded Quaker influence. They love earthy pleasantries, relish allusions savoring of the barnyard, regard the existence of sex as a legitimate source of fun, and particularly enjoy jokes at each other's expense. Ben therefore instantly grips their interest when in his first paper he hints that he is going to expose "private vices" and will not ignore the fair sex, though discussing its members with "the utmost decency and respect."

Ben's second paper is directed against laughers, meaning persons who find amusement in the defects of some poor fellow's dress; he is possibly thinking of his own appearance on his arrival in Philadelphia five years before. In the third he ridicules a stuffed figure called "Cretico." Keimer takes this for his own portrait and tries to reply in a tract falsely labeled: "Printed at the New Printing-Office." Ben replies by issuing a pamphlet entitled "A Short Discourse, Proving that the Jewish or Seventh-Day Sabbath Is Abrogated and Replaced." No doubt the shot

sinks home, for everybody is familiar with Keimer's Mosaic beliefs and practices.

Keimer's method of filling his own columns is simple. He merely takes Chamber's Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences, recently come from London, and begins to reprint it serially, beginning with the letter A. He fills any space left over with short news items and political addresses. It is, however, a better paper in most respects than Bradford's feeble *Mercury,* and might have supplanted it had not Benjamin's contributions filled the *Mercury* with an effervescent elixir. Ben contributes about six papers, all of which cause no end of talk in the community; the last one is a satire at the expense of the numerous inhabitants who spend all their time digging holes in the landscape in the hope of uncovering pirate gold; he then turns the column over to his Junto companion, Joseph Breintnal.

Keimer runs his paper for about nine months, when, in debt and about to flee from his creditors to the Barbadoes, he sells out for a trifle to the waiting Benjamin.

III

Ben drops most of the pompous title, and issues, in a new dress, the first newspaper under his own control on October 2, 1729, he being twenty-three years old. Its name is the *Pennsylvania Gazette.*

After explaining to his readers that he does not deem the reprinting of a dictionary a proper method of communicating knowledge, he sets down his ideals as a publisher as follows:

"We ask assistance, because we are fully sensible, that to publish a good newspaper is not so easy an undertaking as many people imagine it to be. The author of a Gazette (in the opinion of the learned) ought to be qualified with

an extensive acquaintance with languages, a great easiness and command of writing, and relating things clearly and intelligibly and in a few words; he should be able to speak of men both by land and sea; be well acquainted with geography, with the history of the time, with the secret interests of princes and states; the secrets of courts, and the manners and customs of all nations. Men thus accomplished are very rare in this remote part of the world; and it would be well if the writer of these papers could make up among his friends what is wanting in himself. Upon the whole, we may assure the publick, that, as far as the encouragement we meet with will enable us, no care or pains shall be omitted that may make the *Pennsylvania Gazette* as agreeable and useful an entertainment as the nature of the thing will allow."

The first page of the *Gazette* would be considered a fine specimen of printing today. In fact, few journals of the present time surpass it in neatness, legibility, balance, spacing, and general inviting appearance. It is plainly modeled after the pattern set by *The Spectator*, that journal which has done so much to mold Franklin's taste.

One of Franklin's very first editorials causes comment and wins him many subscribers. One of those disputes is going on between Burnet, the Royal Governor of Massachusetts, and the provincial Assembly, which are heralds of the worse one about to ensue between the mother country and all her American colonies. It relates to the governor's salary, the amount of which the colonists have always maintained their right to specify "according to their sense of his merits and services." Burnet had been instructed by his government to demand a fixed salary of one thousand pounds a year. Ben gives a history of the dispute and praises the Assembly for abiding by "what they think is their right, and that of the people they represent," thus re-

vealing "that ardent spirit of liberty, and that undaunted courage, which has in every age so gloriously distinguished Britons and Englishmen from the rest of mankind."

Bradford is still printing the laws and other public documents of Pennsylvania. He prints an address of the House to the governor in a sloppy fashion. Franklin reprints it "elegantly and correctly," and sends a copy to every member. As a result, Franklin and Meredith are chosen, with the support of Mr. Hamilton, the lawyer he met on the London ship, as printers for the House for the next year. This is one of Franklin's first important successes as an advertiser.

IV

In writing for the *Gazette* the festive Franklin richly enjoys himself. His is no squeamish public, and since his tastes are in accord with those of his subscribers, both editor and readers have rare sport with the foibles and failings of the day. He writes letters to himself as editor and answers them in the next issue. He mingles jokes and anecdotes with longer pieces of a moral, philosophical or scientific nature.

One day he describes an alleged lottery in England, in which, to further the increase and multiplication of the species, all the old maids are to be raffled for.

Again, he mentions a Bucks County farmer, who is struck by lightning, which does no damage beyond melting a pewter button on the waistband of his breeches. "Tis well," says the *Gazette*, "nothing else thereabouts was made of pewter."

At another time he returns to his favorite target of religious fanaticism, thus:

"I dismiss my reader with this summary Remark upon what has been said: That as the Christian Religion is the

Best of all Religions, so Christian Superstition, which is the Corruption of it, is the Worst of all Superstitions."

V

The most famous long contribution of Franklin's to the *Gazette* is "Polly Baker's Speech." It is worth quoting at length because there is evidence that Polly is mostly Benjamin. We have already seen that about this time William Franklin was born of an unrecorded mother. Polly's defense of herself as the mother of a natural child is in reality Franklin's own defense of himself made for the benefit of those critics in Philadelphia who have been saying nasty things about him. It is in keeping with what we know of Franklin's strongly feminized nature to find that for publication purposes he again assumes a woman's garb, as in the case of the Mrs. Silence Dogood papers:

"The Speech of Miss Polly Baker before a Court of Judicatory, in New England, where she was prosecuted for a fifth time, for having a Bastard Child; which influenced the Court to dispense with her punishment, and which induced one of her judges to marry her the next day — by whom she had fifteen children.

"May it please the honourable bench to indulge me in a few words: I am a poor, unhappy woman, who have no money to fee lawyers to plead for me, being hard put to it to get a living . . . Abstracted from the law, I cannot conceive (may it please your honours) what the nature of my offence is. I have brought five children into the world, at the risque of my life; I have maintained them well by my own industry, without burthening the township, and would have done it better, if it had not been for the heavy charges and fines I have paid. Can it be a crime (in the nature of

things, I mean) to add to the King's subjects, in a new country that really needs people? I own it, I should think it rather a praiseworthy than a punishable action. I have debauched no other woman's husband, nor enticed any youth; these things I never was charged with; nor has any one the least cause of complaint against me, unless, perhaps, the ministers of justice, because I have had children without being married, by which they have missed a wedding fee. But can this be a fault of mine? I appeal to your honours. You are pleased to allow I don't want sense; but I must be stupefied to the last degree, not to prefer the honourable state of wedlock to the condition I have lived in. I always was, and still am willing to enter into it; and doubt not my behaving well in it; having all the industry, frugality, fertility, and skill in economy appertaining to a good wife's character. I defy any one to say I ever refused an offer of that sort; on the contrary, I readily consented to the only proposal of marriage that ever was made me, which was when I was a virgin, but too easily confiding in the person's sincerity that made it, I unhappily lost my honour by trusting to his; for he got me with child, and then forsook me.

"That very person, you all know; he is now become a magistrate of this country; and I had hopes he would have appeared this day on the bench, and have endeavoured to moderate the Court in my favour; then I should have scorned to have mentioned it, but I must now complain of it as unjust and unequal, that my betrayer, and undoer, the first cause of all my faults and miscarriages (if they must be deemed such), should be advanced to honour and power in the government that punishes my misfortunes with stripes and infamy. You believe I have offended heaven, and must suffer eternal fire; will not that be sufficient? I own I do not think as you do, for, if I thought what you

DIOGENES DISCOVERING FRANKLIN: A FRENCH PRINT MADE IN 1780.

Reproduced from the original in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

call a sin was really such, I could not presumptuously commit it. But how can it be believed that Heaven is angry at my having children, when to the little done by me towards it, God has been pleased to add his divine skill and admirable workmanship in the formation of their bodies, and crowned the whole by furnishing them with rational and immortal souls? Forgive me, gentlemen, if I talk a little extravagantly on these matters: I am no divine, but if you, gentlemen, must be making laws, do not turn natural and useful actions into crimes by your prohibitions. But take into your wise consideration the great and growing number of bachelors in the country, many of whom, from the mean fear of the expense of a family, have never sincerely and honestly courted a woman in their lives; and by their manner of living leave unproduced (which is little better than murder) hundreds of their posterity to the thousandth generation. Is not this a greater offence against the public good than mine? Compel them, then, by law, either to marriage, or to pay double the fine of fornication every year. What must poor young women do, whom customs and nature forbid to solicit the men, and who cannot force themselves upon husbands, when the laws take no care to provide them any, and yet severely punish them if they do their duty without them; the duty of the first and great command of nature and nature's God, increase and multiply; a duty, from the steady performance of which nothing has been able to deter me, but for its sake I have hazarded the loss of the public esteem, and have frequently endured public disgrace and punishment: and therefore ought, in my humble opinion, instead of a whipping, to have a statue erected to my memory."

There are many hidden autobiographical details in this speech. For Franklin's offence in becoming the father of a

natural child he might, had the law been enforced, have received twenty-one lashes at a Pennsylvania whipping post. He therefore imagines himself facing a court; but he transfers the locale to New England. He is, however, unrepentant — this is not his first offense against sexual taboos and it is not likely to be the last.

Mr. S. G. Fisher, in fact, has found evidence indicating that Franklin was the father of *two* illegitimate children, the second one being a girl, who afterwards became the wife of John Foxcroft, postmaster of Philadelphia. In a letter to Franklin dated February 2, 1772, Foxcroft specifically refers to her as "your Daughter." [1]

Franklin is not only unrepentant, but mirthful about his peccadilloes — Polly marries one of her judges and has fifteen children by him.

"I love to hear of everything," Franklin once wrote to his wife, "that tends to increase the number of good people," and his daughter Sarah said in a letter to him when in England: "As I know my dear papa likes to hear of weddings, I will give him a list of my acquaintances that has entered the matrimonial state since his departure."

Franklin, through Polly, then contends that having children, no matter by what means, is "rather a praiseworthy than a punishable action," especially "in a new country that really needs people."

Polly is poor, but possessed of "industry, frugality, fertility, and skill in economy" — the very virtues which Franklin most admires. It is no fault of hers that she is not married; she has been betrayed.

Here Franklin is probably harking back to his friend Ralph's affair with the London milliner, and his own rebuff at her hands.

Polly pleads with lawmakers not to "turn natural and

[1] The True Benjamin Franklin.

useful actions into crimes." Compare this with a later direct statement from Franklin:

"Men I find to be a sort of beings very badly constructed, as they are generally more easily provoked than reconciled, more disposed to do mischief to each other than to make reparation, much more easily deceived than undeceived, and having more pride and even pleasure in killing than in begetting one another; for without a blush they assemble in great armies at noonday to destroy, and when they have killed as many as they can they exaggerate the number to augment the fancied glory; but they creep into corners and cover themselves with the darkness of night when they mean to beget, as being ashamed of a virtuous action." [2]

Franklin's summing up, in Polly's speech, is that he has done nothing of which he is ashamed; he proves this later by his care of William Franklin and the latter's natural son, William Temple Franklin; and finally asserts that instead of a whipping, he ought to have a statue erected to his memory. If statues are a proof of the acceptance of Franklin's opinions, his shade has had a thousand such proofs since, for there are at least that many statues of him now standing in his native country; and shortly after his death some French friends erected a bust in his honor bearing on its pedestal the single word:

"VIR" [3]

VI

Another witty article by Franklin in the *Gazette* is an account of an alleged witch trial at Mount Holly, New Jersey. It gives him an enjoyable opportunity for satire and burlesque at the expense of his favorite enemies, the religious

[2] Works of Franklin, by John Bigelow.

[3] Man.

fanatics who accept the Bible literally and invest the mere book itself with a superstitious power.

"It seems," says Franklin, "the accused had been charged with making the neighbour's sheep dance in an uncommon manner, and with causing hogs to speak and sing Psalms, etc., to the great terror and amazement of the king's good and peaceful subjects in the province; and the accusers being very positive that if the accused were weighed against a Bible, the Bible would prove too heavy for them; or that, if they were bound and put into the river they would swim; the said accused, desirous to make innocence appear, voluntarily offered to undergo the said trials if two of the most violent of their accusers would be tried with them."

Scales and a Bible were ceremoniously introduced. "The wizard was first placed in the scale, and over him was read a chapter out of the Book of Moses, and then the Bible was put in the other scale, which, being kept down before, was immediately let go; but, to the surprise of the spectators, flesh and blood came down plump and outweighed that great Book by abundance."

The mob then proposed trial by water. "Accused and accusers, being stripped (saving only the women their shifts), were bound hand and foot and severally placed in the water . . ." All floated except the chief male accuser. "The more thinking part of the spectators were of opinion that any person so bound and placed in the water (unless they were mere skin and bones) would swim till their breath was gone, and their lungs filled with water. But it being the general belief of the populace that the women's shifts and garters with which they were bound helped to support them, it is said they are to be tried again the next warm weather, naked."

VII

Franklin's essays in the *Gazette* are not always consistent in their teachings or tone. One of the most admired is "The Meditations on a Quart Mug," which contains a moral for chronic drinkers; but there is also a curious catalogue of slang terms and synonyms for drunkenness whose great length — if Franklin was really the compiler of it — indicates that Benjamin had more than a prohibitionist's interest in the subject of alcohol. Some of the terms are:

Addled, Boozy, Buzzey, Crocus, Cock'd, Dagg'd, Cock-Ey'd, Fettered, Glaiz'd, Hammerish, Tagg'd, Juicy, Knapt, Lappy, Momentous, Nimptopsical, Oil'd, Pungey, Raddled, Stew'd, Trammel'd, Valiant.

There is also a song originally written by him for use at Junto Meetings:

Fair Venus calls; her voice obey,
In beauty's arms spend night and day.
The joys of love all joys excell,
And loving's certainly doing well.

Chorus

Oh! no!
Not so!
For honest souls know,
Friends and a bottle still bear the bell.

Then toss off your glasses, and scorn the dull asses,
Who, missing the kernel, still gnaw the shell;
What's love, rule or riches? Wise Solomon teaches
They're vanity, vanity, vanity still.

Chorus

That's true;
He knew;
He'd tried them all through;
Friends and a bottle still bore the bell.

VIII

For a time the pair of young printers manage to keep going and their prospects are steadily improving when they are suddenly made defendants in a creditor's suit. It threatens to take away their whole enterprise.

Hugh Meredith's father has been able to advance them only one hundred pounds for their outfit, on which another one hundred pounds is still due. The youthful partners are unable to raise the money, the creditor threatens foreclosure, and once more Franklin sees another castle about to crash. He has a heart-to-heart talk with Hugh. The latter confesses that he has lost interest in printing and would prefer to follow other Welsh farmers who are settling in North Carolina. Hugh offers to sell out if Ben will take over the debts, return to his father the one hundred pounds borrowed, pay Hugh's personal debts, and give him as a bonus thirty pounds and a new saddle.

Despite these rather exacting terms, Ben is willing to meet them, for Hugh, with his fondness for tavern company, has not been a helpful partner. But he has no money.

At this juncture Ben has reason to thank his guiding Providence that he has founded the Junto, for two members now come forward separately and offer to advance to Ben all the money necessary. They are Robert Grace, the generous and witty, and William Coleman, the cool and clear-headed. Franklin accepts from each half the money offered, pays off Meredith, and becomes in 1730 sole pro-

prietor of Philadelphia's new printing-house. He also pays off the debt long due to Vernon.

So, at the age of 24, Benjamin becomes the head of his own business, without having saved any money, without having worked unusually hard, without having omitted any of the pleasures beloved by imaginative youth, and without having lived up to any of the maxims for which he is later to become renowned.

Chapter XII

Money Making and Saving

I

NOW begins a period of Franklin's career which is to color his thoughts for many years. He has been a little frightened by his repeated failures; he resolves upon success. He has been forcibly reminded of the disadvantages incurred by lack of money; he therefore resolves to get some. He is the proprietor of his own business, but in name only; he wishes to pay off the loans advanced by Grace and Coleman as quickly as possible and stand forth as his own untrammeled boss. He therefore gives himself entirely to the mastery of external things; he becomes the complete extrovert and model *bourgeois*.

In doing this, he calls to his aid his showman's talents. The Autobiography tells how:

" In order to secure my credit and character as a tradesman, I took care not only to be in *reality* industrious and frugal, but to avoid all appearances to the contrary. I drest plainly; I was seen at no places of idle diversion. I never went out a-fishing or shooting; a book, indeed, sometimes debauched me from my work, but that was seldom, snug and gave no scandal; and to show that I was not above my business, I sometimes brought home the paper I purchased at the stores thro' the streets on a wheelbarrow."

II

It is noteworthy that in referring to books Benjamin uses the word " debauched." In this word is epitomized the state

PORTRAIT OF FRANKLIN ENGRAVED IN PARIS IN 1778.

Reproduced from a print in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, based on a portrait formerly belonging to Franklin's friend, M. le Ray de Chaumont.

of civilization then prevailing not only in Pennsylvania but virtually throughout America, except in Virginia, where life and leisure, if not laziness, were virtually synonymous. Philadelphia had not even a bookshop. There was little sale for anything beyond eighteen-penny pamphlets. Literature and the other delightful arts were regarded with deep suspicion. They detracted from the chief end of man, which is to get on. They were "debauching."

III

The Millet-like picture which Franklin presents to his fellow citizens has its effect.

"Thus being esteemed an industrious, thriving young man and paying only for what I bought, the merchants who imported stationery solicited my custom; others proposed supplying me with books, and I went on swimmingly."

Keimer's former apprentice, David Harry, tries for a time to maintain a rival printshop, but being "dressed like a gentleman" and therefore handicapped in wheeling a barrow, follows his former master to the Barbadoes, where Keimer becomes his hired man.

There is no competitor left except Bradford, who now having the post office, pays little attention to printing. He tries to prevent the post riders from carrying Ben's paper, but Franklin circumvents him by bribing the riders. He means to prosper; and by dint of laborious toil and careful saving, does so.

IV

Benjamin's next step is what might be expected. He thinks of marriage. He goes about it as if it were a transaction in salt pork or baled hay; still, this is in accord with

the customs of the people and period. Mrs. Godfrey, whose family lives in Ben's house and with whom he boards, comes forward as matchmaker. She introduces Ben to the daughter of a relative and leaves them often together. Franklin's courtship is rapid, and the time soon arrives for talking business. Ben informs Mrs. Godfrey that he expects the girl's dowry to be enough to pay off the balance due on his printshop, about £100. Mrs. Godfrey spreads her hands, saying the amount is more than they can manage. Ben suggests that they mortgage their house at the loan-office; in a word, "hock" it. She says she will see.

When next she meets Ben, her manner is cold. They have decided the printing business is not a profitable one and that the match had better be called off. The girl is shut up and Ben is forbidden to call. Ben suspects that this is a plot to trap him into a runaway, and hence a dowerless, marriage. He makes no attempt to see his lady-love. After a time Mrs. Godfrey thaws and renews her overtures. But Ben is now in his turn frozen. He announces that he will have nothing more to do with the Godfreys or the girl either. This leads to a row, and the Godfreys move out of the house, leaving Ben there alone.

But Ben is now ready for a marriage: he also needs the money; so he tries to meet other ladies. He learns that parents think poorly of the printing business and that money is not to be expected with a daughter, unless he will take an ill-favored one. So for the time being he is compelled to remain in single state.

V

Meantime Ben has obtained one or two profitable "jobbs" of printing paper money. These come to him because of the success of his anonymous pamphlet, "A Modest

Inquiry into the nature and necessity of a Paper Currency." For a young man of twenty-four this is a remarkable production. Its ideas, probably derived from his studies of Locke and Defoe, are far in advance of those of the period. For instance, Ben lays down the dictum that money is only a medium of exchange and that the measure of its value is labor. "Money as bullion," he says, "is valuable by so much labor as it costs to produce that bullion." Franklin's argument is that to promote the commerce of the country more money is needed. He therefore becomes one of the country's first proponents of currency inflation. His writings on money are said to have received the respectful attention both of Adam Smith and Karl Marx.

His proposals are violently opposed by the Proprietaries, the land speculators, the money-lenders, and their satellites among the professions. They are supported with equal vigor by the shopkeepers, merchants, tradesmen, and small manufacturers. The latter class being more numerous and having more representatives in the Assembly, win the fight. The Lords of Trade in England are defied and £30,000 in new money is ordered printed. Much of the credit for this victory goes to Franklin, and his prestige in the eyes of the town burgher class is correspondingly heightened.

He procures the printing of the laws and votes of the provincial government; opens a stationer's shop, and is soon able to hire a compositor and an apprentice. The latter is the son of Aquila Rose, the subject of Keimer's hand-set threnody.

The strain of earning a mere living is considerably eased. He commands more leisure than formerly. He now stands solidly on the first rung of the ladder of success.

Chapter XIII

Marriage

I

AS a former lodger and a rising man of affairs, Benjamin is often consulted by the family of Mr. Read, who is now dead. He is a frequent visitor at the Read home. There he sometimes sees Deborah Read. She remains woeful of face and avoids company. Ben is conscience smitten. He resolves to repair his "erratum" in neglecting her. He again proposes marriage and is accepted.

Deborah's mother has already lamented her interference in preventing the marriage before Franklin sailed for London, and though she now welcomes the prospect of Benjamin as a son-in-law, she fears Rogers, though reported dead, may turn up some day. There is also the matter of Rogers' debts, which Ben might have to assume. But the young people have already had enough of old folks' caution and they go ahead. The date of the ceremony is September 1, 1730.

In his Autobiography Franklin does not say they were married. He says, "I took her to wife." No record of a legal marriage exists. Perhaps this was omitted because of the uncertainty of Deborah's status. Anyhow, no complications ever ensued. Debby's no-account husband never appeared, and Ben was never bothered by Rogers' creditors. Soon she is calling him "Pappy," and he addresses her as "dear child."

No better wife could have been found for a young man on the make. Debby soon recovered her spirits and eagerly helped Benjamin in all his pursuits. No doubt in her gratitude for escaping a lonely grass widowhood, she was happy to work for Franklin incessantly. She made all his linen and woolen clothing by hand. She tended the shop, helped to make ink with lamp-black, and traded in goose-feathers. She was a tireless housekeeper.

For these labors a thoughtful nature had equipped her with a sound physique. She was broadly built, and full bosomed, with a kind of vigorous beauty. The best picture of her is by Franklin himself. When in London later he wrote her of finding "a large fine jug for beer."

"I fell in love with it at sight: for I thought it looked like a fat jolly dame, clean and tidy, with a neat blue and white calico gown on, good natured and lively."

She was lively enough, as her resolute defense of her home when attacked by a mob during the negotiations with England about the Stamp Act later proved; but there is more doubt about the uniformity of her good nature. Witnesses have left testimony as to her sharp tongue, and there is evidence that at one time she became heartily tired of William Franklin's presence in the house. She deserves some excuse for this, perhaps, as William turned out to be a rather self-centred and pompous young man, who extracted high satisfaction from the fact of his own existence.

She became the mother of two children. The first was Francis Folger Franklin, whose death at the age of four still gave his father a pang when he wrote about it 50 years afterward. The boy is buried near his parents in the yard of Christ Church, Philadelphia. The other child was the amiable Sarah Franklin, afterwards Mrs. Richard Bache.

II

In that day it was not deemed good Americanism to educate the female mind, and Debby Franklin's letters show that she had merely an impressionist's view of grammar and spelling. The following specimen, from a letter dated October 29, 1773, is preserved by the American Philosophical Society:

"I shall tell you what consernes myself our yonegest Grandson is the finest child as alive he has had the small Pox and had it very fine and got abrod agen Capt All will tell you a boute him Benj Franklin Beache but as it is so deficall to writ I have desered him to tell you I have sente a squerel for your friend and wish her better luck it is a very fine one I have had very bad luck with two they one killed and another run a way allthou they was bred up tame I have not a caige as I donte know where the man lives that makes them my love to Sally Franklin — my love to all our cousins as thou menthond remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Weste due you ever hear aney thing of Ninely Evers as was . . . I am your afeckthone wife

"D. Franklin."

Debby's letters are full of household references and local gossip. For example, she writes on June 30, 1772, that "George is a widower and a dreadful crier but he is a looking out but shant mary very soon."

Franklin's letters to her contain the same kind of homely material. During his many long absences from her — there was one period of ten years in London and another of nine in Paris — he wrote her constantly and affectionately in the indulgent manner of an elder addressing a child. He never tired of praising her thrifty virtues to his friends and he even wrote a song in her honor, entitled "My Plain Country Joan." One stanza was:

"Some faults we have, and so has my Joan,
But then they're exceedingly small;
And now I'm grown used to them, so like my own,
I scarcely can see them at all,
My dear friends,
I scarcely can see them at all."

Debby regularly attended Christ Church, which practice Franklin, though not a church-goer himself, encouraged. This was the cause of a typical advertisement, evidently written by Franklin himself, which appeared one day in the *Gazette:*

"Taken out of a pew in the Church, some months since, a Common Prayer Book, bound in red, gilt, and lettered D. F. (Deborah Franklin) on each cover. The person who took it is desired to open it, and read the Eighth Commandment, and afterwards return it into the same pew again; upon which no further notice will be taken."

Though Franklin was content with her as a helpmate, he does not seem to have missed her much as a companion, when absent on his political missions; Debby was not the type of woman who could give him much intellectual stimulus or sympathy. To a versatile but slightly lethargic man like Franklin the companionship of bright and vivacious women met one of his fundamental needs, and what he could not find at home, he sought for elsewhere. He was in particularly high feather when in the society of young girls. He made friends of them wherever he went, at home, in England, and in France. His attitude towards them was that of an appreciative father and counsellor. All his life he had feminine correspondents by the score, and he liked to remember them with little notes, gifts, and delicately amorous compliments. Debby does not seem to have minded these little flirtations, and his daughter Sally was

not only aware of his relishes in this respect but even encouraged them, if we may judge by these extracts from her letters to him:

"I see the girls this morning, and they begged me to send their love to you . . . There is not a young lady of my acquaintance but what has desired to be remembered to you."

An occasional husband misunderstood Franklin's fondness for stimulating feminine society, but most of the male relatives of the gay and witty women whom he liked, regarded his friendship with them indulgently. But it cannot be said to which class the French husband belonged who, witnessing his young wife's infatuation for Franklin's society in Paris, finally made her a present of a *vase de nuit* in the bottom of which was stamped the face of the American savant.

Chapter XIV

The Era of Poor Richard

I

BENJAMIN has now reached a stage in which he is ready to launch his first public project for doing good to his fellow men.

The Junto has solidly established itself and has, by a process of fission, given birth to several other similar clubs called the Vine, the Union, the Band, etc. Young Benjamin's sagacious mind soon discerns the advantages that lie in this method of organization. The Junto remains the mother club, and to it the younger clubs are required to report what goes on at their meetings. Thus Benjamin has a rare opportunity for keeping in touch with public sentiment and also for influencing opinion when necessary.

The Junto has been able to move from its tavern quarters to a little room lent by Robert Grace. There books are often brought by members who wish to prove a point in a debate. Their gradual accumulation gives Ben an idea. He proposes that members club their books together so as to form a common pool or library which may be freely consulted by all. Accordingly one end of the room is soon filled. But after a time some of the books became damaged by careless use, and their owners withdrew them.

Ben then emerges with a scheme for a public subscription library. It is probably the offspring of his experience with Wilcox, the London bookseller, who permitted him, for a fee, to take out and return books. His keen observation of human nature teaches him to set about the project cannily.

Since he must ask for subscriptions, he carefully refrains from announcing the scheme as his own, but offers it as that of "a number of friends" who have asked him to present it to "lovers of reading." The method works. Though there are few genuine book-lovers in Philadelphia and though support is asked almost exclusively from comparatively poor young workingmen, about fifty persons are found who are willing to pay forty shillings down and ten shillings annually thereafter. Ben has a plan and rules drawn up in articles of agreement prepared by a conveyancer. The library is duly founded. The date is 1731. Since almost no books of value have yet appeared in America, the stock is imported from England. After many delays the books arrive from London, where they were purchased by Franklin's friend, Peter Collinson. In 1732 the library is opened for the giving out of books once a week. Franklin himself printed the first catalogue of them, for which he was exempted from dues for two years. In its second year he was also the librarian.

The Philadelphia Library was soon imitated in other towns and provinces. This gave Benjamin much pride. He wrote in his Autobiography:

"Reading became fashionable; and our people, having no public amusement to divert their attention from study, became better acquainted with books, and in a few years were observed by strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank generally are in other countries."

Franklin himself used the library an hour or two every day. The founding of the library was his attempt to remove the peasant mind from himself and the American people.

II

Reading was the only diversion which Franklin was then permitting himself. He worked indefatigably, not only because he wanted to get ahead, but as he himself says, because it was necessary. He had a debt to pay off and a young family to care for and educate. He resorted neither to "taverns, games nor frolicks." He and Debby kept no servants and ran their house with the closest economy. His breakfast consisted of bread and milk, eaten out of a two-penny porringer with a pewter spoon. His printing business gradually forged ahead. His shop, under the ministrations of the tireless Debby, increased its stock until it included besides the usual stationer's supplies, soap, cheese, tea, coffee, "very good sack," and old rags. The laying in of a stock of pocketbooks was the herald of a new day. It meant that the inhabitants were beginning to carry paper money instead of loading themselves with bulky coin or depending on barter. The inflation of the currency which Franklin had advocated was having its effect. Prices had risen, but wages had risen to correspond, so no one worried. Philadelphia had added several thousands to its population. The numerous "To Let" signs on the houses, which had been conspicuous when Benjamin first arrived, were gone, and a general stir and bustle were visible. Franklin was able to thrive largely because the town was thriving too.

One day a significant event occurred in the Franklin household. Debby called her Benjamin to breakfast, and there on the table he found his bread and milk contained in a China bowl with a silver spoon. It was Debby's little surprise. She acknowledged that the new bowl and spoon had cost "the enormous sum of three-and-twenty shillings," but was proud of it. "She thought *her* husband deserved

a silver spoon and China bowl as well as any of his neighbors." In short, Debby was resolved to keep up with the Joneses.

III

It is 1732. On February 22 of this year a male infant is born at Bridges Creek, Westmoreland County, Virginia. His name is George Washington. George II is king of England. The first colony in Georgia is being founded. The Spaniards hold Florida, and the French are consolidating their grip on Canada and the valley of the Mississippi down to New Orleans. They are extending a line of forts southward and are incessantly being charged with inciting the Indians, who, seeing themselves being constantly pushed westward by land-hungry Englishmen, probably do not need much incitement to commit an occasional massacre, for which they invariably suffer frightful reprisals. But, generally speaking, it is a time of peace and hopefulness.

It is at this favorable moment that Franklin, at the age of 26, launches "Poor Richard's Almanac." His aim is the public good. "I considered it a proper vehicle," he says, "for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books; I therefore filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality, as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue; it being more difficult for a man in want, to act always honestly, as, to use here one of those proverbs, *it is hard for an empty sack to stand upright.*"

Virtue is the product, result, and concomitant of wealth. It was through the medium of "Poor Richard," then, that Franklin promulgated this dictum, which was accepted at the time by the American people and religiously believed in by

their descendants for nearly a century and three-quarters, until the investigations into the operations of the great insurance companies of New York by Charles Evans Hughes created the first dim doubts as to whether virtue is necessarily and under all circumstances the daughter, by immaculate conception, of grandiose financial success.

Benjamin published the first advertisement for the almanac in his Pennsylvania *Gazette* on December 19, 1732, as follows:

"Just published, for 1733, An Almanack, containing the Lunations, Eclipses, Planets' Motions and Aspects, Weather, Sun, and Moon's Rising and Setting, High Water, etc.; besides many pleasant and witty Verses, Jests, and Sayings; Author's Motive of Writing, Prediction of the Death of his Friend, Mr. Titan Leeds; Moon no Cukold; Bachelor's Folly; Parson's Wine and Baker's Pudding; Short Visits; Kings and Bears; New Fashions; Games for Kisses; Katherine's Love; Different Sentiments; Signs of a Tempest; Death of a Fisherman; Conjugal Debate; Men and Melons; The Prodigal; Breakfast in Bed; Oyster Lawsuit, etc. By Richard Saunders, Philomat. Printed and Sold by B. Franklin."

Almanacs had been highly popular in the American colonies from the first, particularly in Pennsylvania, where agriculture predominated. In Philadelphia there were no less than seven. The best known of these was one issued by a solemn individual named Titan Leeds.

Benjamin had already learned that a new publication, to succeed, must be instantly talked about. In his very first issue he therefore perpetrates one of the hoaxes that he loves and announces the forthcoming death of this same Leeds.

"Inexorable death, who was never known to respect merit," says Poor Richard, "has already prepared the mor-

tal dart, the fatal sister has already extended her destroying shears, and that ingenious man must soon be taken from us. He dies, by my calculation, made at his request, on October 17, 1733, 3ho., 29m., P.M. . . . By his own calculation, he will survive till the 26th of the same month. This small difference between us, we have disputed whenever we have met these nine years past; but at length he is inclined to agree with my judgment. Which of us is most exact, a little time will now determine. As, therefore, these Provinces may not longer expect to see any of his performances after this year, I think myself free to take up the task."

"Poor Richard" tickled the fancy of a public grown tired of the stodgy contents of the other almanacs. Three editions were sold out in a month. At fivepence a copy this brought a good profit to the fertile Franklin. He continued to publish the almanac successfully for twenty-five years.

Titan Leeds, as Ben expected, took Poor Richard's prediction seriously. He replied by calling him names and stoutly asserted that he would be alive and writing long after Poor Richard was dead.

Poor Richard on his next appearance declares that though there is no positive proof, it is hardly to be doubted that Titan is dead. "The stars only show to the skilful what will happen in the natural and universal chain of causes and effects; but 'tis well known that the events which would otherwise certainly happen, at certain times, in the course of nature, are sometimes set aside or postponed, for wise and good reasons, by the immediate particular dispositions of Providence; which particular dispositions the stars can by no means discover or foreshow. There is, however (and I cannot speak it without sorrow), there is the strongest probability that my dear friend is no more; for there appears in his name, as I am assured, an Almanack for the year

1734, in which I am treated in a very gross and unhandsome manner; in which I am called a false predictor, an ignorant, conceited scribler, a fool and a lyar. Mr. Leeds was too well bred to use any man so indecently and so scurrilously, and moreover, his esteem and affection for me was extraordinary; so that it is to be feared that pamphlet may be only a contrivance of somebody or other, who hopes, perhaps, to sell two or three years' Almanacks still; by the sole force and virtue of Mr. Leeds' name."

Incidentally Poor Richard seizes the occasion to rejoice in the success of his venture. His wife no longer has to borrow a cooking pot but can afford one of her own. "She has also got a pair of shoes, two new shifts, and a new warm petticoat; and for my part I have bought a second-hand coat, so good that I am not ashamed to go to town and be seen there. These things have rendered her temper so much more pacific than it used to be that I may say, I have slept more, and more quietly, within this last year, than in the three foregoing years put together."

This speech was well calculated to please the farmers, for it identified Poor Richard as one of themselves and also dealt with a domestic situation familiar at a period when overwork, hardship, and absence of comfort, drove many women into ill-temper, lunacy, or the grave.

IV

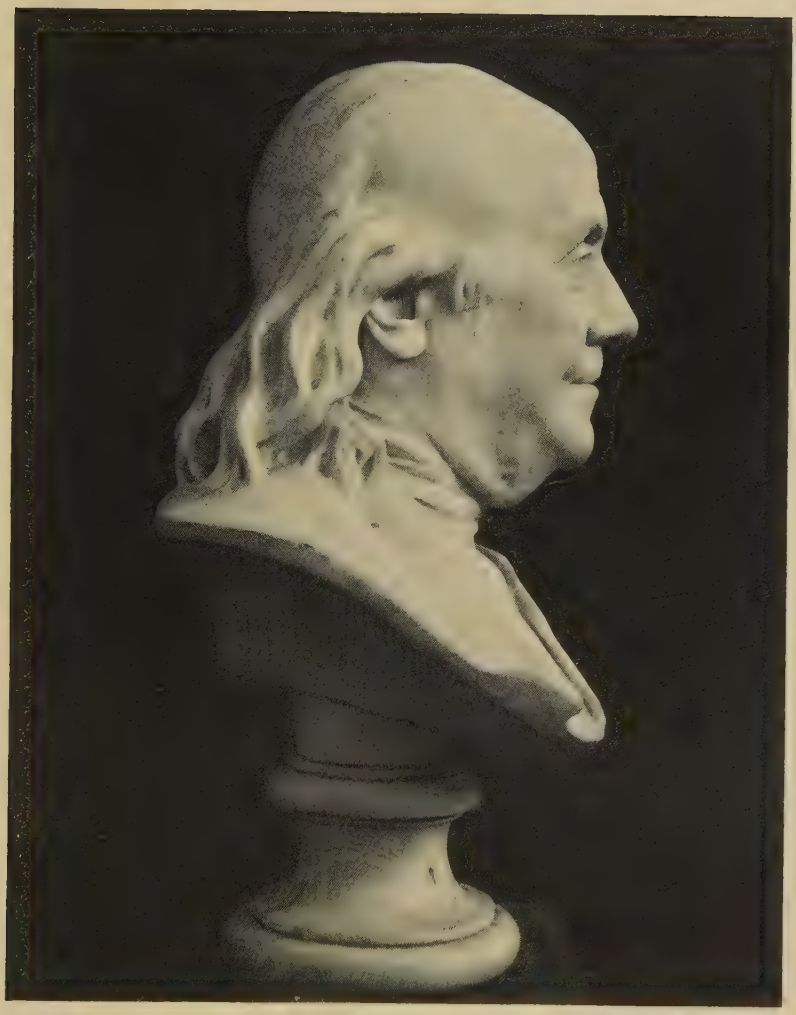
Poor Richard well reflects the manners, customs, and improprieties of the period. In England, whose social observances are quickly reflected in America, there has been a reaction against Cromwellian Puritanism. It is an era when the broad allusions of Fielding and Smollett in written literature, and Gay and Congreve in the drama, offend not even the most "refained" taste. This rhyme from Poor Richard well illustrates the humor of the 18th century:

"When Robin now three days had married been,
And all his friends and neighbours gave him joy,
This question to his wife he asked then,
Why till her marriage day she proved so coy?
Indeed, said he, 'twas well thou didst not yield,
For doubtless then my purpose was to leave thee:
O, Sir, I once before was so beguil'd,
And was resolved the next should not deceive me."

It is significant that in Pennsylvania, the western part of which, at least, was never successfully included in the Puritanic belt, the ancient and respected custom of "bundling" survived until comparatively recent times. Under such free if not easy conditions Franklin was able to give full play to his love for a very racy type of humor. This did not please all the Philadelphians any more then than it would now; indeed, Mr. S. G. Fisher, the historian, is authority for the intimation that for years after his death Franklin was regarded in upper-class Philadelphia circles as a repugnant old wretch, and in his day there were certainly many parlors into which he would not have been admitted unless previously disinfected.

The following jingle from Poor Richard's Almanac for 1744 is probably flavored by the bundling custom:

Biblis does solitude admire,
A wondrous Lover of the Dark:
Each night puts out her Chamber Fire,
And just keeps in *a single Spark;*
'Till four she keeps herself alive,
Warmed by her piety, no doubt;
Then tired with kneeling, just at five
She sighs — and lets that Spark *go out.*



PROFILE OF BUST OF FRANKLIN BY HOUDON

IN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK.

The italics are Benjamin's own. Ben was no poet — whatever poetry his nature originally possessed had long ago been stamped out by the stern practicality of his father's admonitions — but he was a versifier of no mean skill. The following pieces which appeared in Poor Richard from time to time will illustrate his wit, also the tastes of his subscribers:

Two or three frolicks abroad in Sweet May,
Two or three civil things said by the way,
Two or three languishes, two or three sighs,
Two or three *bless me's* and *let me dies*,
Two or three squeezes, and two or three tow-zes,
With two or three hundred pound spent at their houses,
Can never fail cuckolding two or three spouses.

Says Roger to his wife, my dear,
The strangest piece of news I hear;
A law, 'tis said, will quickly pass
To purge the matrimonial class;
Cuckolds, if any such we have here,
Must to a man be thrown i' the river;
She smilingly cry'd — My dear, you seem
Surprized; *Pray, han't you learn'd to swim?*

Old Batchelor would have wife that's wise,
Fair, rich, and young, a maiden for his bed:
Not proud, nor churlish, but of faultless age,
A country housewife in the city bred.
He's a nice fool, and long in rain hath staid;
He should bespeak her, there's none ready made.

Poor Richard's prose humor, as exemplified in his prefaces to the almanac and in his numerous maxims, runs in a

similar Rabelaisian vein. Explaining the duties of a star-gazer, "he spies perhaps *Virgo* (or the virgin), she turns her head as it were to see if any body observed her, then crouching down gently, with her hands on her knees, she looks wistfully for a while right forward. He judges rightly what she's about; and having calculated the distance and allowed time for its falling, finds that next spring we shall have a fine *April* shower."

Concerning eclipses, Poor Richard writes: "During the first visible eclipse Saturn is retrograde; for which reason the crabs will go sidelong and the ropemakers backward. The belly will wag before, and the —— shall sit down first."

These are some of his aphorisms:

"A ship under sail and a big-bellied woman, are the handsomest two things that can be seen common."

"After three days men grow weary of a wench, a guest, and weather rainy."

"You cannot pluck roses without danger of thorns, nor enjoy a fair wife without danger of horns."

"Neither a fortress nor a m——d will hold out long after they begin to parley."

V

Such pleasantries, however, were merely sprinkles of salt to make the full dish more savory. Franklin could never long resist being didactic, and the almanac gave him full opportunity to insert between the customary observations

the wise saws and adages, most of them revamped from Bacon, la Rochefoucauld, and Rabelais, which made Poor Richard's name famous and for which Franklin is best known to the world at large even today. Some of them were:

Industry need not wish.

Forewarned, forearmed.

Diligence is the mother of good luck.

Keep thy shop and thy shop will keep thee.

Necessity never made a good bargain.

God heals, the doctor takes the fee.

There are three faithful friends, an old wife, an old dog, and ready money.

Fly pleasures and they'll follow you.

Let thy child's first lesson be obedience, and the second will be what thou wilt.

He that would have a short Lent, let him borrow money to be repaid at Easter.

Keep your eyes wide open before marriage; half shut afterwards.

As we must account for every idle word, so we must for every idle silence.

Let thy discontents be thy secret.

Let thy maid servant be faithful, strong, and homely.

Deny self for self's sake.

Love well, whip well.

This stock of canny maxims was greatly increased by the publication of "Father Abraham's Speech" in the Almanac for 1758. At this time the colonists of America were disgruntled because of the heavy taxes occasioned by the campaigns against the French and Indians. All sorts of schemes were proposed to remedy the hard times. Franklin's rem-

edy was more thrift, and to emphasize his contention he put these remarks in the mouth of "Father Abraham," whose sermon he pretended had been overheard by Poor Richard at an auction:

The used key is always bright.

Early to bed, and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.

Industry pays debts, while despair increaseth them.

One today is worth two tomorrows.

The cat in gloves catches no mice.

Constant dropping wears away stones.

What maintains one vice would bring up two children.

He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing.

Experience keeps a dear school, but fools will learn in no other.

Fools make feasts and wise men eat them.

God gives all things to industry.

Lost time is never found again.

He that riseth late must trot all day.

Leisure is the time for doing something useful.

Three removes are as bad as a fire.

A small leak will sink a great ship.

Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessaries.

If you would have your business done, go; if not, send.

In Poor Richard's Almanac, then, was founded the great American Philosophy of Get-on. It was eagerly read and accepted throughout the colonies, and as "The Way to Wealth" was reprinted in many editions in foreign countries. Its maxims appeared in countless copybooks, over which young penmen toiled laboriously with small hands and moist tongues. To thousands it still recalls dismal

memories of staying in after school. Poor Richardism gave to parents a bludgeon which they brought down upon the heads of all their children, regardless of their diverse natures, gifts, and predilections. It established a rock of philosophic materialism against which generations of sensitive craft beat in vain. It well nigh drove out from the spirit of the American people, all tendency to a love for leisure and a cultivation of the graceful arts, made its literature didactic and its art timid, and remained almost unchallenged until Walt Whitman hurled his shout across the roofs of the world: "I loaf and invite my soul."

VI

How to account for it?

Those who have followed Franklin's career in these pages thus far will readily see that his maxims, as aired by Poor Richard, are colored by his own experiences and difficulties up to the year 1732, when he first began to sight financial independence. Before that time he had never saved any money, never succeeded in any enterprise despite continuous hard work; never brought order into his affairs; and never lived either a moral or a regular life. When he married, became a father, and started a business, he changed his habits. He did so, because he had to. Out of this necessity he accordingly manufactured virtue, and began to preach the new gospel of work-and-save.

It was a gospel peculiarly suited to small tradesmen who were becoming employers and to farmers who wanted to grow out of tenantry into proprietorship. They took to Poor Richard's pawky teachings with avidity. And Franklin, who naturally wanted to sell his almanac, naturally gave them more and more of the same. Even in France, where Poor Richard was translated as *Bon Homme Richard*, his

philosophy was eagerly accepted by the mercantile class, which had grown tired of monarchy and aristocracy, with their heavy taxes and weight on individual enterprise.

Did Franklin practice what he preached?

Yes, until he had acquired a comfortable fortune. He then as we shall see, gaily tossed overboard all his Poor Richardisms and mingled almost exclusively with the leisured class whose opportunities he had always envied, but from which he had previously been barred by the disease which Poor Richard lamented as "Lackomony." We shall see how he changed his habits shortly after he became forty years old, thus bearing out his own maxim: "At 20 years the will reigns; at 30 the wit; at 40 the judgment."

As Poor Richard he uttered this maxim:

"Women and wine, game and deceit,
Make the wealth small and the want great."

Compare this with a letter he wrote in 1761, when again in London, to his friend Hugh Roberts:

"For my own part, I find I love company, chat, a laugh, a glass, and even a song, *as well as ever*." Our italics. We still have great respect for you, Benjamin, because of your geniality and mirth, your many abilities and achievements, but henceforth you must not expect us to regard you as the fount of all wisdom. Or of consistency.

VII

The profits from the *Gazette* and Poor Richard enable Benjamin to begin several new projects. He founds the first German newspaper in America, the *Philadelphische Zeitung;* publishes several pamphlets, chiefly sermons, and an occasional political tract; and imports fine books from England which he sells in his shop.

Hearing that a printer is wanted in Charleston, S. C., he sends one of his journeymen there and sets him up under a partnership agreement by which Franklin pays one third of the expense and receives one third of the profits. His protégé dies, but his widow, a Dutch girl, successfully continues the business, brings up a family on the profits, and eventually purchases the business from Franklin. This makes a deep impression on Benjamin. He at once decides that a knowledge of accounts is more important to young females than either music or dancing.

This experiment having worked out well, he backs other young journeymen in the same way and sends them to various provinces. "Most of them," he writes, "did well, being enabled at the end of our term (six years) to purchase the types of me, and go on working for themselves, by which means several families were raised. Partnerships often finish in quarrels; but I was happy in this, that mine were all carried on and ended amicably; owing, I think, a good deal to the precaution of having very explicitly settled in our articles every thing to be done by, or expected from, each partner, so that there was nothing to dispute, which precaution I would therefore recommend to all who enter into partnership."

It was this method of sending out young revenue producers that helped to lay the foundation of Franklin's fortune, which later invested in land, grew to considerable dimensions and enabled him to make an early retirement from money-making. For business he had an acquired rather than an innate taste, and he was glad to be rid of it.

He is in his 28th year when he pays his second visit to Boston, after an absence of about nine years. His parents are hale, with a good many more years to live. On his return, he stops at Newport to see his brother James. Poor James is weakened by ill health and is glad to be friends

again with the younger brother, whom he was once accustomed to beat. He asks Ben to take home with him his small son and teach him the trade. After James's death Franklin does so, while the boy's mother, Anne, carries on the Newport printshop, with the help of her two daughters. They become skilled compositors and are probably the first women printers in America. When the boy is grown, Franklin supplies him with an outfit of new type. Thus does he repair one of the first of what he calls his "errata," in deserting James and running away to Philadelphia.

His increased leisure now enables Benjamin to take up the study of foreign languages. He learns French, Spanish, and Italian. He acquires facility in Italian by characteristic device. A friend who is also studying the language, knowing Ben's weakness for chess, entices him into many games. Ben finally refuses to play any more except on condition that the loser pay a forfeit by learning a new part of speech or doing a translation. Since their ability is about equal, they "beat one another into that language."

Soon afterwards Ben picks up a Latin Testament. He finds that he can read it fairly well. He is surprised; he thought he had forgotten all of the tongue he had learned as a boy in Boston. He concludes that the prevailing method of teaching ancient and modern languages is all wrong; that the modern, being easier, should come first and so prepare the way for the harder ancient tongues. But this is a reform against which the American school system braces itself resolutely, and decades elapse before the suggestion is adopted.

Chapter XV

First Ventures in Politics

I

BENJAMIN is 30 years old when his fellow citizens recognize his merits by electing him to his first political post. He becomes clerk of the Pennsylvania General Assembly without opposition. In the following year a new member makes a speech against him in favour of another candidate. Ben wins, but thereafter he keeps his eye on the new member. He finds this gentleman is likely to be a person of influence. He takes thought and hits upon a typical scheme. He hears that this man owns a certain rare and curious book. Ben therefore writes to him, politely requesting the loan of it. The owner sends it promptly. Ben returns it in a week, carefully accompanying it with a letter of profuse thanks. The new member is touched. When next he meets Ben, he speaks to him for the first time and with great civility. He afterwards goes out of his way to do Ben other favours. From this Ben draws a sage conclusion:

"*He that has once done you a kindness will be more ready to do you another, than he whom you yourself have obliged.*"

It is at this moment that B. Franklin, politician, is born.

But whatever illusions he has about the thrills of parliamentary life are dispelled when he finds that, as Assembly clerk, he must be present and listen to hour upon hour of tedious speeches emanating from unicellular egotists.

He is disappointed that so few members act with "a view to the good of mankind." He dreams of a "United Party for Virtue," to include the good and wise men of all nations. At other times he despairs of public life and beguiles the windy hours by figuring out "magical squares," causing the celebrated James Logan, William Penn's Secretary, to write to Peter Collinson in London:

"Our Benjamin Franklin is certainly an extraordinary man, one of a singular good judgment, but of equal modesty. He is clerk of our Assembly, and there, for want of other employment, while he sat idle, he took it into his head to think of magical squares, in which he outdid Frenicle himself, who published above eighty pages in folio on that subject alone."

In the same year Colonel Spotswood, the postmaster general, becomes dissatisfied with the accounts of Andrew Bradford, his deputy and Ben's competitor, and offers the place to Franklin, who instantly accepts. The pay is small, but the job greatly increases his facilities for gathering both news and advertisements. The circulation of the *Gazette* increases and so does its revenue. It is another sign that Ben has turned the corner of success.

B. Franklin, office-holder, now occupies an eminence from which he can observe the conduct of public affairs. He first proposes to reform the Night Watch, composed of a comic crew of ragamuffins under a guzzling constable given more to grafting than to guarding. Ben suggests that efficient men be hired and paid by taxing property-owners in proportion to the value of their possessions. This is the origin of the modern municipal system of police roundsmen.

He next organizes a volunteer fire company of thirty members, with leather bags for carrying water and bags and baskets for removing goods. As compensation for obliging

the members to keep this equipment in good order, he provides a social evening once a month. Other companies spring up, finally giving rise to the Union Fire Company of Philadelphia.

Franklin's method of putting over these projects are the same in every case. He first prepares notes for a speech or paper before the Junto. Noting the effect on the members, he next publishes an article in the *Gazette*. If a scheme does not at once take hold, he lays it aside for a time, but firmly produces it later.

It was in this manner that he successfully launched an academy for the "compleat education of youth," which grew into the University of Pennsylvania, and brought about the formation of the American Philosophical Society, which has continued its honorable history down to the present day.

II

Now comes along a period of religious excitement into which Benjamin is drawn. He dislikes preachers as a class, but is always ready to exempt ingratiating individuals. For example, he has already taken part in the defense of Samuel Hemphill, a young Presbyterian, or rather Unitarian, preacher who came to Philadelphia from Ireland in 1734 and immediately brought on himself, because of his lack of dogma, the dislike of the orthodox. Hemphill vanished when it was discovered that he was repeating other men's published sermons, which he had committed to memory. As a result of the ensuing quarrel, Franklin left the congregation and never went back, though he continued his contributions for the support of the ministry.

In 1739 arrives, also from Ireland, the renowned George Whitefield. Ben at first holds aloof, but when the Philadelphia pastors begin to refuse Whitefield their pulpits,

forcing him to preach in fields, Franklin is irresistibly attracted, and is soon helping Whitefield's supporters build a huge tabernacle as a free church.

Whitefield leaves Philadelphia for his historic visit to Georgia, where he finds helpless children perishing because their broken fathers are unable to make a living in the woods. Whitefield returns with a grand scheme for an orphan asylum down there. Franklin advises him to build it in Philadelphia and bring the children to it. Whitefield declines, so Ben refuses to contribute.

He goes to a Whitefield meeting one day, but with his mind made up to give nothing. The preacher begins his discourse, and Ben decides to give some coppers. The speaker adds some of the flowers of oratory and Ben thinks of giving some silver. Whitefield concludes in a glorious burst, and Ben empties his pockets, copper, silver and gold, and all.

Ben and the preacher became admiring friends. Whitefield used to pray for his conversion but in vain. Once Whitefield, after an absence, wrote that he was coming to Philadelphia but was not sure where he could lodge. Ben invited him to his home. The preacher wrote that if he had made his offer for Christ's sake, he should not fail of reward. Ben's historic reply was:

"Don't let me be mistaken; it was not for Christ's sake, but your own sake."

Franklin proves his admiration for the great preacher by bringing out his Sermons and Journals in four volumes. They are sold out in advance of publication.

In the same year, 1740, Benjamin announces another publishing venture — a magazine to be called "The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle for all the British Plantations in America." It is to be a novelty, in that no subscriptions are to be accepted. It is to be sold exclusively

by " chapmen." This is probably the origin of the present-day news-stand magazine.

A quarrel breaks out between the editor-elect, John Webbe, and Franklin over a division of the prospective profits. Webbe goes over to Ben's old rival, Bradford, whose " Mercury " thereupon announces the forthcoming publication of a periodical to be called " The American Magazine, or A Monthly View of the Political State of The British Colonies." About this time the post-riders are forbidden to carry the " Mercury " any longer, and Webbe declares that Ben, as the deputy postmaster-general, is responsible for the order. " The American Magazine " beats Franklin's publication out by three days. But the former is dead in three months and the latter in six. The American colonists are not yet ready for a literary magazine.

The year 1740 beholds other broils of more consequence. War begins in Europe, and General Oglethorpe of Georgia, by laying siege to St. Augustine, begins a series of attacks which are eventually to drive the Spaniards out of Florida. Not many years longer are Americans to farm their clearings in peace.

Chapter XVI

The First Thrills from Science

I

ALL this time Benjamin continues his diligent studies at the Philadelphia Library. No matter what his duties, he spends an hour or two there every day, roaming through volume after volume. The library is growing steadily both in the number and quality of its books. Every year Peter Collinson sends over from London a well-selected assortment, and sometimes adds a few volumes of his own as a gift.

It can be imagined that one day Ben takes down from a shelf a large, well-printed book known as *Boyle's Lectures*. Robert Boyle was an English naturalistic philosopher and writer on religious topics, born in 1627 and dying in 1691. His book is a hodge-podge of observations dealing with natural phenomena and accounts of homely experiments, mingled with long theological discussions. The latter are tedious and meaningless, but his scientific observations are sharp, practical, and entertainingly described. It is evident that the good brother writes his religious essays as a kind of self-imposed duty, but that his real zest is reserved for his experimentations.

It is on record that Ben dipped into this book when he was a half-grown boy in Boston, and though it made a certain impression upon him, it is unlikely that he was able to grasp its contents fully owing to his extreme youth. Now, however, the book reawakens all his dormant curiosity.

Moreover, Boyle teaches him that the most exciting discoveries as to the workings of nature can be made simply by keeping one's eyes incessantly open and by using apparatus no more elaborate than that which can be found in any well-equipped kitchen. From notes faithfully kept and compared, certain laws can be deduced and proved in the most thrilling manner.[1]

We can imagine that Ben goes home and sits down reflectively in front of the fireplace. It is of the good old, bad old type. It bakes the face and permits the back to freeze. It must be constantly fed with wood, which it burns wastefully. It sometimes has nervous fits, drawing badly and filling the room with smoke. Ben therefore resolves to begin with this the nearest thing at hand. The result is the invention of the Franklin stove, one of the first contrivances to banish barbarism from the American home and give it a civilizing comfort marvelled at by the world.

Franklin's reform was simple. He simply took the fireplace out of its deep recess where 99 per cent of its heat was bound to escape up the chimney and reconstructed it so as to cause it to warm the fresh air as it entered.

Franklin had no thought of making money from the invention. Experimentation in physical science was simply one of his methods of enjoying himself. He therefore presented the model to his friend Robert Grace, who owned a furnace. Grace immediately began to do a good business by casting plates for the stove. To promote the demand, Ben also wrote an advertising booklet entitled: "An Ac-

[1] Tending to confirm this supposition is the following verse from Poor Richard's Almanac for 1750:

"Still be your darling Sturdy Nature's laws;
And to its Fountain trace every Cause.
Explore, for such it is, this high Abode,
And tread the Paths which *Boyle* & *Newton* trod."

count of the new-invented Pennsylvania Fireplaces; wherein their Construction and Manner of Operation is particularly explained; their Advantages above every other Method of warming Rooms demonstrated; and all Objections that have been raised against the Use of them answered and obviated," etc.

Governor Thomas was so pleased with the stove that he offered to give Ben a patent on it, but Franklin declined on this ground: "that, as we enjoy great advantages from the invention of others, we should be glad of an opportunity to serve others by any invention of ours; and this we should do freely and generously."

A London ironmonger, however, did not scruple to steal the idea of the stove, and made changes in it — for the worse, and got a patent for it, from which he made a small fortune. "And this," wrote Franklin, "is not the only instance of patents taken out for my inventions by others, tho' not always with the same success, which I never contested, as having no desire of profiting by patents myself, and hating disputes."

A little later Ben, simply by noting the time of an eclipse with reference to a storm that swept over the Atlantic Coast, was able to determine that northeast storms, contrary to the popular notion, moved backwards against the wind from the southwest to the northeast. He also cuts a hole in his kitchen wall and places a little windmill there to turn the meat roaster. Unconsciously he is shaping his mind and sharpening his faculties for the discovery with which his name is to be associated for all time.

In 1744 is born Franklin's daughter Sarah. In the same year occurs the death of his father, the good but limited Josiah. About the same time son William ruptures the family inhibitions and runs away to sea. He gets as far as the deck of a privateer when father Benjamin descends upon

FRENCH STATUETTE OF CHINA BISQUE

SHOWING FRANKLIN SURROUNDED BY HIS BOOKS AND SCIENTIFIC APPARATUS, AND WEARING HIS CHARACTERISTIC SHREWD SMILE.

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

him and drags him back home again. Franklin's nephew and namesake, Benjamin Mecom, son of his sister Jane, is the next repressed Franklin to hear the call of the ocean wave. He is also brought back and placed as an apprentice in the New York shop of James Parker, one of Franklin's many partners. Franklin tries to soothe the fears of young Mecom's mother in the following letter:

"When boys see prizes brought in and quantities of money shared among the men, and their gay living, it fills their heads with notions, that half distract them, and put them quite out of conceit with trades, and the dull ways of getting money by working. This, I suppose, was Ben's case, the Catherine being just before arrived with three rich prizes; and that the glory of having taken a privateer of the enemy, for which both officers and men were highly extolled, treated, and presented, worked strongly upon his imagination. My only son, before I permitted him to go to Albany, left my house unknown to us all, and got on board a privateer from whence I fetched him. No one imagined it was hard usage at home, that made him do this. Every one that knows me, thinks I am too indulgent a parent, as well as master."

So quickly does the younger generation become the older. It has been only a very few years since Franklin was wanting to run away to sea himself.

II

We are come to the year 1745. November finds three men experimenting with a glass jar connected with a rude apparatus at the University of Leyden, Holland. They are professors Muschenbroek and Allemand and an amateur friend named Cuneus. They are trying to verify and extend the experiments of Gilbert, von Guericke, Hawksbee,

and Dufay in exciting electric currents, thereby producing sparks and flashes. Several men have suspected that these flashes are the same nature as lightning, but nothing definite is known. The Dutch experimenters have progressed far in producing electricity by friction, but they have failed to find a method of collecting and retaining it. The power leaks away even as it gathers. Muschenbroek suspects that what is needed is a non-conducting container. He therefore fills a bottle half full of water. The water is a conductor, the glass a non-conductor. Into the water he dips one end of a wire leading to his friction machine. Nothing happens. Cuneus chances to touch the machine with one hand while the other is in the water. The result is a shock that not only runs around Mr. Cuneus but around the world. The first electric shock has been created by a man-made device. The two professors repeat the experiment and are promptly knocked out. There is no doubt that the workings of a mighty and hitherto mysterious force have been uncovered.

The Leyden jar instantly becomes the sensation of the scientific and near-scientific worlds. It is carried all over Europe and of course capitalized by fakers and itinerant medicine-men. Electricity is to cure all ailments, eradicate double chins, and restore lost hair. Mountebanks find the Leyden jar better than alchemy. It converts an invisible force into gold coin.

The next year Franklin pays a visit to his mother in Boston. While there he witnesses some astounding experiments performed with an electric tube which, when rubbed with buckskin, charges objects with electricity. Dr. Spence had brought the new apparatus over with him from Scotland. From that time on Benjamin is lost to all other worlds. He takes a tube sent him from London by Peter Collinson and has duplicates made at Philadelphia. With

these Franklin enjoys some of the most exhilarating hours of his life.

"I never was before engaged," he wrote, "in any study that so totally engrossed my attention and my time as this has lately done; for, what with making experiments when I can be alone, and repeating them to my friends and acquaintance, who, from the novelty of the thing, come continually in crowds to see them, I have, during some months past, had little leisure for anything else."

Any task, however, which requires concentrated attention over a long period soon tires Franklin, and he suddenly turns from these engrossments to become the first Pennsylvania advocate of preparedness for war.

England's war with France has drawn in the American colonies, and a New England force has just taken the fort of Louisburg, on the island of Cape Breton. Part of the powder was furnished by the colony of Pennsylvania, under a grant of £3000 voted by the Quaker-dominated Assembly for the purchase, Franklin says, of "bread, flour, wheat and *other grain*."

A proposal is made to put Pennsylvania and Philadelphia in a state of defense. But the populace fails to become excited. Franklin then issues a pamphlet of 22 pages entitled "Plain Truth."

"What must be your condition," he said to the Philadelphia burghers, "if suddenly surprised, without previous alarm, perhaps in the night! . . . Your best fortune will be, to fall under the power of commanders of kings' ships, able to control the mariners, and so into the hands of *licentious privateers*. Who, can, without the utmost horror, conceive the miseries of the latter, when your persons, fortunes, wives, and daughters shall be subject to the unbridled rage, rapine, and the lust of negroes, mulattoes, and others, the vilest and most abandoned of mankind."

Franklin does not scruple to call in the help of his old enemy, the clergy. He induces the Governor to appoint a fast day, and himself writes the proclamation in New England style.

The agitation succeeds. A public meeting is called. Benjamin makes a speech, and several hundred young men sign applications for membership in an association for defense. In order to build a battery on the river front, Ben also proposes a lottery, which is successfully held. Not enough cannon being available, Franklin is sent on his first diplomatic mission as a member of committee which goes to New York to borrow some guns from Governor Clinton.

The Governor is at first obdurate; he says New York has no cannon to spare. A dinner is held by the council. The Governor attends. Some excellent Madeira wine is introduced. History does not say by whom; but possibly it was no other than our sagacious Benjamin. The Governor samples a little of the wine and sees the situation in a new light. He thinks that after all New York can spare six cannon to so good a neighbor as Pennsylvania. He quaffs a few more bumpers and voluntarily raises the number to ten. Before the evening is over, he has without solicitation offered eighteen, and is quietly removed by friends before he strips New York's defenses bare and gives the entire contents to Pennsylvania. The New York guns are soon transported to Philadelphia and mounted. A nightly guard is posted, in which Benjamin takes his turn as a common soldier, until peace is signed at Aix-la-Chapelle.

B. Franklin, military man, is born, aged 41.

Before the war is over, however, Franklin has enough of strutting up and down a barren and lonely earthwork and is soon back at the fascinating sport of electrical experimentation. In this he is joined by Ebenezer Kennersley, Thomas Hopkinson, and Philip Syng, who occasionally make experi-

ments on their own account. For this joint and simultaneous labor some authorities think that Franklin has received an undue amount of credit. However, Franklin arrived independently at what he called the "plus and minus," later known as the positive and negative, theory of electricity; and he never claimed that the group's momentous discovery that electricity is not created but only *collected* by friction, was his exclusively. At any rate there was glory enough for all.

The year 1748 finds Benjamin no longer interested in printing, editing or publishing for commercial purposes. He therefore sells his printing office, almanac, and newspaper to his associate, David Hall, for £18000, payable in annual instalments of £1000. He already owns an estate bringing him an annual income equivalent to about $3500. His two political offices bring about $750 more. He retires with the assurance of an ample income for a good many years. He moves to the outskirts of the town at Second and Race Streets, near the Delaware.

So at the age of 42 Franklin rids himself of all business cares. Henceforth he means to devote himself to electricity, to enjoying himself, and to the public good.

Chapter XVII

The Challenge to the Clouds

I

FRANKLIN soon finds that his avowed plans for a life consisting entirely of philosophical studies and amusements are not approved by his fellow citizens. They have other uses for him. Wherever they find a vacant office they try to push Benjamin into it. The governor appoints him a justice of the peace. The Philadelphia corporation makes him a member of the common council and later an alderman. The citizens send him to the Assembly as a burgess.

As a judge Franklin is a failure. Court procedure bores him, and he finds excuses for withdrawing from it, pleading insufficient knowledge of the law. Being a legislator is more to his taste. · He is re-elected again and again, for ten successive terms. He accepts each time, though never offering himself as a candidate. He has already made up his mind to adhere to this rule: "Never to ask for an office, never to refuse, and never to resign."

Son William, now about 20 years old, gets a job in the Assembly, too, as its clerk. Franklin does not say it was through his influence, but very likely it was. All his life Franklin looked out politically for his relatives. He was one of the earliest American exponents of nepotism.

II

At the first opportunity, however, Ben is back at the magnificent sport afforded by the fascinating jar from Leyden.

The faithful Peter Collinson has sent one over from London, and this is followed by a present to the Philadelphia Library Company of a whole set of electrical apparatus from Thomas Penn, one of the two sons of William Penn, who are the Pennsylvania Proprietaries. Meantime Franklin has bought the apparatus of Dr. Spence. With this equipment he and his friends contrive an electric battery with which they propose to send a spark through the Schuylkill River from bank to bank, using the water as a conductor. Ben's house is filled with curious idlers and headshaking skeptics. The older inhabitants predict the judgment of God on him, and when on two occasions he is knocked stone-cold by rambling currents, they join in the age-old chant of "I told you so."

The phenomena which most absorb Benjamin's attention are the action of lightning and the cause of thunder. These have been mysteries since ancient days, and as far back as 1737 Franklin has mentioned them in the *Gazette*. The whole winter of 1747–1748 he gives to tests and speculations. Finally in 1749 emerges his first paper on the subject entitled "Observations and Suppositions towards forming a new Hypothesis for explaining the several Phenomena of Thunder-gusts." Later came his paper on "Opinions and Conjectures concerning the Properties and Effects of the Electrical Matter, and the means of preserving Buildings, Ships, etc., from lightning, arising from Experiments and Observations made at Philadelphia, 1749."

It is in the latter that he makes his first suggestion concerning experiments with lightning rods which are to "draw the electrical fire silently out of a cloud." Science for its own sake is all very well for some people, but not so for Benjamin the Yankee. He is not satisfied until he can put Science under the currycomb and lock her in the stable at night alongside the family cow and billygoat.

His conclusions he sent in a letter to Peter Collinson, dated July 29, 1750. The generous and loyal Collinson at once laid them before the Royal Society in London, whose members did little more than look down their noses and sniff. It was still the Age of Condescension in the mother country and gentlemanly English scientists were not going to be stampeded by any half-wild colonial. Growing impatient at their inaction, Collinson the next year published Franklin's papers in a pamphlet prefaced by Dr. John Fothergill, long one of Franklin's firmest friends.

A copy got to France and was promptly seized upon by Buffon, the natural philosopher, who procured its translation and publication. The French were delighted. From that moment Franklin's name in France became synonymous with interesting novelty. King Louis XV had every suggestion made by Franklin carried out in his presence on the grounds of the Duke d'Ayen. The French scientist Dalibard was actually the first man in the world to perform the Franklin experiment with an iron rod, thereby proving that electricity and lightning were identical. It was a month later before Franklin proved the same fact by drawing an electric current out of the clouds not with a rod but by means of the kite and key with which his name is associated for all time.

The experiment was performed on a June afternoon of 1752, in a pasture near what is now the corner of Fourth and Vine streets, Philadelphia. His only companion was his son William, who was not the fat urchin that illustrators of the alleged scene have loved to depict, but a grown young man. They sheltered themselves meantime under a cow-shed. From instructions written by Franklin, we gather that his kite was made of a thin silk handkerchief fastened to a cross of cedar. From the top of the kite projected a pointed wire to act as the lightning-catcher. The conductor

was the kite string of sleazy twine. Tied to the end of the twine and held in the hand was a silk ribbon, to act as a non-conductor and keep the current from shooting through the daring experimenter's body. Where the ribbon and twine joined, a key was fastened to act as a circuit breaker.

Let us try to reconstruct the scene. Father Benjamin, with Son William palpitating in the rear, goes out to the pasture on a sultry afternoon. Looms a beautiful thunder-head behind a breath of wind. It mutters in its throat and spits viciously between its red teeth. Straight up into its black face soars the tiny white kite. Nothing happens. There is a crack of thunder and a sprinkle of rain. The rain wets the kite and twine nicely, but Father Ben backs further under the shed so that the silk ribbon may be kept dry. He is put to it to keep the twine from touching the roof, knowing that otherwise there may be some fireworks not on the program. Still nothing happens. He wonders what is wrong. The cloud draws almost overhead. There is a moment of dense and racking silence. Then Benjamin, trying to show a fatherly calm before the nervous William, notices that the loose fibres of the twine are standing out straight. He runs a finger close to and parallel with them, but not touching them. The filaments wave to and fro. He holds his fist cautiously near the key. A dart of fire leaps out to his knuckles.

It is enough. They wait till the clouds pass and then pull down their kite and go home, probably to be scolded by Deborah for not having sense enough to come in out of the rain. There has been nothing astounding, nothing noisy. It has been a simple affair of a key and a kite and a cow pasture. In his *Autobiography* Franklin passes over his electrical experiments with the barest mention. But Franklin's kite did more than draw lightning quietly out of the clouds. It drew a dread from the cluster in the soul of man. It

pulled one more superstitious fear from his imagination. It jerked one of the Genii from the threatening heavens and made him stand ready to spring into his collar at a lever's touch.

III

The world, its dramatic sense thrilled to the spine, rejoiced and ran for garlands. But on all occasions of public rejoicing, there must be at least one who stands apart from the feast. In France the Abbé Nollet not only pronounces Franklin's discovery all bosh, but proves to his own satisfaction that no such person ever existed. However, in that country there are other Abbés who wait to do him honor. And later two men humbly come forward to beg information about lightning and such things from the great Dr. Franklin. They do not know that one day they themselves will be known as the very sons of lightning. Their names are Marat and Robespierre.

Let us, however, keep the record clear. Franklin was not, as so many of his countrymen vaguely imagine, the discoverer of electricity. He simply dramatized it more successfully than any of his predecessors, and he later popularized it and helped to tame it. He showed more clearly than anyone that lightning was a mere manifestation of electricity, and that electric-laden clouds do not, as supposed, strike into the objects on the earth, but that the objects of the earth strike into electric-laden clouds. He achieved this by keeping his eyes open and then putting two and two together. Therein lay his superiority. Even today few are taught to keep their eyes open and fewer are capable of putting two and two together. He crowned his achievements by writing about them clearly and charmingly, using terms that even tyros could understand. We thus begin to comprehend the source of Franklin's fame: he could not only do things but get publicity for them.

Chapter XVIII

Projects Ripen and Increase

I

FRANKLIN'S nature could not endure long concentration on any one subject. His method of refreshing his mind was to skip gaily from one project to another, just as they bobbed up. In a single letter he was capable of mingling observations on politics, science, women's fashions, ventilation in bedrooms, and the price of beans, with entire unconcern. Even his *Autobiography* does not concern itself with continuity. It backs, fills, retreats, recollects itself, darts forward at increased speed, and then wanders off on by-paths only remotely connected with the subject in hand.

Hence it is no surprise to find him suddenly switching off his electric currents to go back to his scheme for an academy. He begins, as usual, by prodding up the Junto, interesting a few friends, and then printing a pamphlet entitled "Proposals relating to the Education of Youth in Pennsylvania." According to his Socratic method, he avoids mentioning it as a project of his own, but introduces it as that of "some public-spirited gentlemen." The scheme takes hold and the school is soon housed in the wooden tabernacle previously built for the Rev. Mr. Whitefield. By this time Franklin was experienced in the ways of religious sects, so to see that no one of them got the upper hand, it was provided that the trustees should consist of one representative of each Philadelphia sect. The Moravian one soon fell afoul of his colleagues. They waited patiently till he died and then re-

fused to have another like him. A dispute arose as to the filling of the vacancy. To settle it, Franklin himself was chosen as "merely an honest man and of no sect at all."

The trustees having worn themselves out in these quarrels, they had no energy left to make the necessary changes in the building, so Franklin had to do the work himself, even purchasing the materials. Out of this academy, which was to be partly a "free school for the instruction of poor children," grew the present University of Pennsylvania, of which Franklin was a trustee for forty years.

From this occupation he suddenly plunges back into politics and becomes, with William Hunter of Virginia, postmaster-general of the colonies. Two commissioners being needed to negotiate a treaty with the Indians at Carlisle, the assembly chooses the speaker as one. The other is, of course, Franklin. The Indians open the solemn proceedings with a demand for rum. They are informed they will get none until the treaty is signed. The business is concluded with astonishing celerity. The Indians then receive their rum. They at once get howling drunk, humorously try to set fire to each other with brands plucked from a bonfire, and finish the day by coming to the commissioners' door at midnight with a thunderous demand for more rum. The next day they send three of their elder statesmen to make an apology. It was not they who did the cutting up, they said, but the rum. Franklin gives the substance of their speech as follows:

"*The Great Spirit, who made all things, made everything for some use, and whatever use he designed anything for, that use it should always be put to. Now, when he made rum, he said, 'Let this be for the Indians to get drunk with,' and it must be so.*"

It is not improbable that the waggish Franklin invented this speech himself. He has already been guilty of adding

to the Book of Genesis a chapter with which he confounds the devout when he reads it to them aloud. It is not improbable, too, that out of this historic treaty made at Carlisle, on ground afterwards sacred to football, he drew the material for his caustic essay called "Remarks concerning the Savages of North America," one of the best pieces of writing he ever did and one in which the white man is proved to be no better than the savage whom he despises.

II

The next project to come before Franklin concerns a hospital for Philadelphia. One of his numerous medical friends, Dr. Thomas Bond, brings it up. He confesses that his personal efforts have had no success so far; everybody asks, "Have you seen Franklin about it, and what does he say?" Ben's interest is immediately won. He goes about the scheme with all the chuckling zeal of a conspirator. Finding that the rural members of the Assembly will not make a grant because of their jealousy of the city, he asks the legislators to appropriate 2000 pounds on condition that the city raises an equal amount. The device succeeds. The country members "now conceived that they might have the credit of being charitable without the expense," and the subscribers were told that each man's contribution would be doubled. "Thus," says Franklin triumphantly, "the clause worked both ways." So was created the Pennsylvania Hospital, which still stands.

"*I do not remember,*" adds Franklin, "*any of my political maneuvers the success of which gave me at the time more pleasure, or wherein, after thinking of it, I more easily excused myself for having made some use of cunning.*"

Such feats in money-raising are bound to draw the attention of the unsuccessful, and the next to come for help is

the Rev. Gilbert Tennent, who wants to build a new meeting house for a group of Presbyterian dissenters. Benjamin flatly declines to give money or services, but offers advice instead. "Apply to all those," he said, "whom you know will give something; next to those whom you are uncertain whether they will give anything or not, and show them the list of those who have given; and lastly do not neglect those who you are sure will give nothing, for in some of them you may be mistaken." The preacher laughed but obeyed the advice; he got the church and more than enough money.

It is by similar methods, sometimes slow but always sure, that Benjamin finally induces the lethargic town to pave its filthy streets; to introduce street-cleaning; and to pattern after the example of one of its progressive citizens in placing a lamp at street doors, thus gradually "enlighting" all the city. The idea was John Clifton's, but the fertile Benjamin improved on it by inducing the town not to adopt the foul globe lamps of London, but to use his own invention of a four-sided lamp with a funnel above and air-channels at the bottom.

Franklin's efforts to find a better way of doing everything were not confined to cities alone. Having become prosperous enough to buy land near Burlington, N. J., he engaged in agricultural experiments concerning which he wrote long letters to friends. To show his fellow farmers how their soil would benefit from the application of lime, he sowed a field and then inscribed upon it in large white plaster letters: "THIS FIELD HAS BEEN PLASTERED." When the white letters disappeared, they emerged in a vigorous green visible at a distance. He procured samples of broom corn from Virginia and distributed the seeds among friends. He is said to have introduced the yellow willow from Europe. He encouraged the planting

in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts of Rhenish grape vines. He made numberless experiments in soil-cultivation and manures. He defended this "attention to affairs of this seemingly low nature" by saying that "*human felicity is produced not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day.*"

He wrote to Whitefield: "For my own part, when I am employed in serving others, I do not look upon myself as conferring favors, but as paying debts. In my travels, and since my settlement, I have received much kindness from men, to whom I shall never have any opportunity of making the least direct return; and numberless mercies from God, who is infinitely above being benefitted by our services. Those kindnesses from men I can therefore only return to their fellow men, and I can only show my gratitude for these mercies from God, by a readiness to help his other children and my brethren."

It is greatly to Franklin's credit that he nowhere claims that his prosperity was due exclusively to his own efforts or to the "vision," "foresight," and "energy" which the obsequious ascribe to successful men. His willingness to return to his fellow men the equivalent of what he had derived from them indicates that by the time he had reached the middle forties he had become a genuinely civilized human being.

III

By now, Franklin's mother, Abiah, has attained a great age and is gradually failing, though the next year she writes that she still has "a pretty good stomach to my victuals." Addressing her as "Honoured Mother," he gives her some news of her grandchildren: "Will is now 19 years of age, a tall, proper youth and Much of a Beau. He acquired a

Habit of Idleness on the Expedition (to Canada). He imagined his Father had got enough for him, but I have assured him that I intend to spend what little I have myself. . . . Sally grows a fine girl, and is extremely industrious with her needle, and delights in her work. She is of a most affectionate temper, and perfectly dutiful and obliging to her parents, and to all."

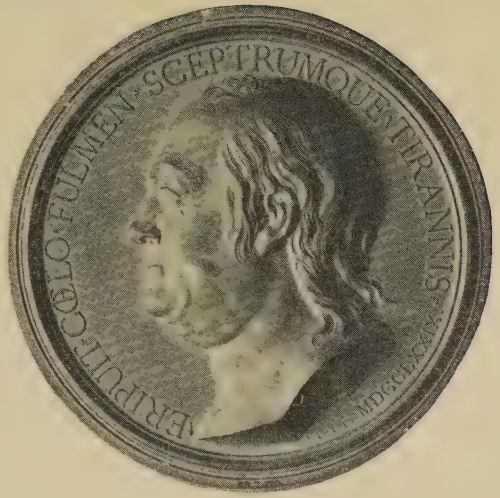
It is this letter which closes with the celebrated remark of Franklin: "I would rather have it said, *He lived usefully*, than *He died rich*."

When Abiah died in 1752, Franklin wrote to his sister Jenny: "I received yours with the affecting news of our dear good mother's death. I thank you for your long continued care of her in her old age and sickness. Our distance made it impracticable for us to attend her, but you have supplied all. She has lived a good life, as well as a long one, and is happy."

Franklin's memory does not seem to have received so strong a stamp from his mother as from his father. In his *Autobiography* she is barely mentioned, though his father's name is repeated many times. She seems to have been a serious-minded old lady and gazed upon the business of life rather grimly, not being cushioned with the sense of humor in which her agile son delighted. Possibly it was because one's sense of humor wears rather thin when spread over thirteen children.

IV

The next public service which Franklin examines with an eye to improvement is that of the post office. As joint postmaster-general for the colonies, he finds that current practices are slow and cumbrous. There is a mail between Philadelphia and New York only once a week. To exchange letters between Philadelphia and Boston sometimes



MEDALLION OF FRANKLIN BY NINI

CONTAINING THE FAMOUS SAYING IN LATIN REGARDING FRANKLIN ATTRIBUTED TO TURGOT: "HE HAS TORN THE LIGHTNING FROM THE SKY; SCEPTRES FROM KINGS."

From the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

JEAN PAUL MARAT

LEADER OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND VICTIM OF CHARLOTTE CORDAY'S KNIFE, WHO ONCE ASKED FRANKLIN TO PASS ON CERTAIN OF HIS SCIENTIFIC STUDIES.

From a bronze plaque in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

requires six weeks. Post-riders go no farther north than Boston and no farther south than Charleston. In 1735 Franklin makes a tour of inspection and introduces several reforms. He creates the first penny-post known in the colonies. He straightens routes, puts on more riders, and in general speeds up the service. He opens the mail-bags to all newspapers and establishes the practice of advertising unclaimed letters. He materially increases the revenue, even up to the point where it is able to pay his own salary with a profit over. He is still engaged in this work when he is suddenly summoned to a great task.

He answers the summons laden with fresh honors. They are bestowed by Yale College, which makes him a Master of Arts, and Harvard, which recognizes him likewise.

Chapter XIX

Franklin's Humorous Year

I

BEFORE we take up the next phase of Franklin's career, a serious one in which he begins his first exercises in statecraft, we must retreat a little to the year 1745. This was one of Franklin's most mirthful years. There is a reason for it. All his various enterprises were prospering. His printery, his newspaper, his almanac and his shop were doing well and he was holding two political jobs which fattened his income. For the first time in his life, at the age of 39, he was under no money anxieties. He therefore could relax and utilize some of his increasing leisure time as he pleased. It was in this year that he wrote a few of his slyest productions. Belonging in this period is "Polly Baker's Speech," given in a previous chapter. In 1745 he wrote one of the letters which editors and biographers suppressed until the Philadelphia *Portfolio* printed it years later, in the course of an attack on Franklin for "hypocrisy." As addressed to James Read it follows:

"Dear J.

"I have been reading your letter over again, and since you desire an answer I sit me down to write you; yet as I write in the market, will I believe be but a short one, tho' I may be long about it. I approve of your method of writing one's mind when one is too warm to speak of it with temper: but being myself quite cool in this affair I might as well speak as write, if I had the opportunity. Your copy

of Kempis must be a corrupt one if it has that passage as you quote, *in omnibus requiem quaesivi, sed non inveni, nisi in angulo cum libello.* The good father understood pleasure (*requiem*) better, and wrote *in angulo cum puella.* Correct it thus without hesitation."

Also in 1745 he wrote the letter to an unknown correspondent which has been called "Advice to a Young Man on the Choice of a Mistress." Like so many of Franklin's papers after his death, it was left to remain in an accumulating pile of junk until Henry Stevens, of Vermont, a bibliophile long resident in London, bought it along with a mass of other Franklin documents and kept it until in 1881 he sold his collection of Franklin manuscripts to the United States government for $35,000. It is now in the possession of the State Department at Washington. Certain writers and biographers have listed it or hinted at its existence in such a way as to excite a curiosity which they might as well have allayed. Since the letter is in a sense a public document which helps to reveal Franklin just as he was, there is no longer any reason for not publishing it in full. It follows here just as Franklin wrote it, with f's used to indicate the old-fashioned "s":

To PHILADELPHIA, 25 June, 1745

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I know of no medicine fit to diminiſh the violent natural inclinations you mention; and if I did, I think I ſhould not communicate it to you. Marriage is the proper remedy. It is the moſt natural ſtate of man, and therefore the State in which you are moſt likely to find ſolid Happineſs. Your reaſons againſt entering into it at preſent appear to me not well founded. The circumſtantial Advantages you have in view by poſtponing it, are not only uncertain, but they are ſmall in compariſon with that of the Thing itſelf, the being married and ſettled. It is the Man and Woman united that make the compleat human Being. Separate, She wants his Force of Body and Strength of Reaſon; he, her Softneſs, Senſibility and acute Diſcernment. Together

they are more likely to ſucceed in the World. A ſingle man has not nearly the value he would have in the State of Union. He is an incomplete Animal. He reſembles the odd half of a pair of Sciſſars. If you get a prudent, healthy Wife, your Induſtry in your Proffeſſion, with her good Economy, will be a fortune ſufficient.

But if you will not take this Counſel and perſiſt in thinking a Commerce with the Sex inevitable, then I repeat my former Advice, that in all your Amours you ſhould prefer old Women to young ones.

You call this a Paradox and demand my Reaſons. They are theſe:

1. Becauſe they have more Knowledge of the World, and their Minds are better ſtored with Obſervations, their Converſation is more improving, and more laſtingly agreeable.

2. Becauſe when Women ceaſe to be handſome they ſtudy to be good. To maintain their Influence over men, they ſupply the Diminution of Beauty by an Augmentation of Utility. They learn to do a thouſand Services ſmall and great, and are the moſt tender and uſeful of Friends when you are ſick. Thus they continue amiable. And hence there is hardly ſuch a thing to be found as an old Woman who is not a good Woman.

3. Becauſe there is no Hazard of Children, which irregularly produced may be attended with much Inconvenience.

4. Becauſe through more Experience they are more prudent and diſcreet in conducting an Intrigue to prevent Suſpicion. The Commerce with them is therefore ſafer with regard to your Reputation. And with regard to theirs, if the Affair ſhould happen to be known, conſiderate People might be rather inclined to excuſe an old Woman, who would kindly take care of a young man, form his Manners by her good counſels, and prevent his ruining his Health and Fortune among mercenary Proſtitutes.

5. Becauſe in every Animal that walks upright, the Deficiency of the Fluids that fill the Muſcles appears firſt in the higheſt Part. The Face firſt grows lank and wrinkled; then the Neck; then the Breaſt and Arms; the lower Parts continuing to the laſt as plump as ever: ſo that covering all above with a Baſket, and regarding only what is below the Girdle, it is impoſſible of two Women to know an old one from a young one. And as in the dark all Cats are grey, the Pleaſure of Corporal Enjoyment

with an old Woman is at leaſt equal, and frequently ſuperior; every Knack being, by Practice, capable of Improvement.

6. Becauſe the Sin is leſs. The debauching a Virgin may be her Ruin, and make her for life unhappy.

7. Becauſe the Compunction is leſs. The having made a young Girl miſerable may give you frequent bitter Reflection; none of which can attend the making an old Woman happy.

8th & laſtly. They are ſo grateful ! !

Thus much for my Paradox. But ſtill I adviſe you to marry directly; being ſincerely

Your affectionate Friend,

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Not even this writer, however, has the hardihood to include another of Franklin's suppressed documents. It is known as the letter "On Perfumes." It is supposed to have been addressed to the Royal Academy of Brussels and was intended as a satire on the fatuous activities of most of the scientific societies of the time. It does not deal, as not a few of Franklin's letters did, with the fact of sex in a manner sportive and jocund, but with Rabelaisian gravity lays certain proposals before the Belgian academicians regarding the creation of gases within the human system during the processes of digestion. The title of the paper suggests the nature of Franklin's remedy.

"Let it be considered," writes Franklin, "of how small importance to Mankind, have been useful those Discoveries in Science that have heretofore made Philosophers famous. Are there twenty men in Europe at this day the happier, or even the easier, for any knowledge they have pick'd out of Aristotle? What Comfort can the Vortices of Descartes give to a Man who has Whirlwinds in his Bowels? " . . .

II

Few of the biographers and commentators on Franklin's life have been able to stomach all his writings. In some

cases their prudish omissions have amounted to a deliberate falsification of the genuine records. William Temple Franklin, who edited the original edition of the Autobiography, tried to alter his grandfather's short and Saxon words into a stilted phraseology of his own. The Rev. Mason Weems' life of Franklin is a collection of fairy tales. Jared Sparks, one of the earliest and most devout of biographers, could not bring himself to print the word "belly" when it occurs in Franklin's papers, but omitted it in a way that frequently changed the sense of a passage. Albert H. Smyth, the most faithful compiler of Franklin's documents, omits reference to the letter "On Perfumes," and even the blunt Sydney George Fisher fails to give the whole of "The Choice of a Mistress." Senator William Cabell Bruce [1] gives quotations accurately, but cannot refrain from accusing his subject of "moral squalor." None, however, reaches the height of prunes-and-prisms indignation attained by Charles Francis Adams, who says: "The errors of Franklin's life may be detected almost anywhere in his familiar compositions. They sprang from a defective early education which made his morality superficial to laxness, and under-mined his religious faith." [2] Even Thomas Jefferson wrote: "There are defects in the life of that great man which it is not wise to palliate or excuse." [3]

The present age, however, is one less hostile to facts. It is willing to regard a man as great despite human shortcomings. It believes with Oliver Cromwell that a portrait should include all the warts.

[1] Benjamin Franklin Self-revealed.
[2] Life of John Adams.
[3] Writings of Jefferson, edited by H. A. Washington.

Chapter XX

Army General and Ambassador

I

IN 1753 the American colonies hear the preliminary rumblings of the Seven Years' War which is enormously to extend the boundaries of England's empire, humiliate and weaken France, and bring Prussia into the European picture with a doughty boldness which is eventually to frighten the world into the convulsion of 1914–1918.

The Americans, being patriots all, prepare to fight for England's claim to the valley of the Mississippi. They hasten to make peace with all the Indian tribes which are not already on the side of the French, in order to prevent the latter from cutting them off from the vast tract of fertile land just granted by George II to the Ohio Company. Under this pressure the colonies make their first attempt at union. A conference is called by the English Lords of Trade to make defensive arrangements with the Six Nations. Seven colonies send delegates to Albany, New York, in June, 1754. The Pennsylvanians are John Penn, Richard Peters, Isaac Norris, and Franklin. There for the first time Franklin meets Thomas Hutchinson, of Massachusetts, with whom later he is to have something to do.

Franklin is all for union. He publishes in his *Gazette* a rough picture of a snake cut into seven pieces, having the caption "Join or Die." He submits a scheme which is to comprise all the provinces under one government, afterwards known as the Albany Plan of Union. After noisy

debate, the delegates approve it unanimously. They go home feeling that they have taken the first great step towards American unity. But to their astonishment, officialdom is cold. The various colonial assemblies think the plan concedes too much to the prerogative of the King, while in England it is deemed dangerously democratic. The English Lords of Trade refuse even to consider it, but counter with a plan of their own.

In Boston Governor Shirley shows him a copy of it. Franklin at once detects a poisonous clause in it. It provides that the defense of the colonies shall be in the hands of a council of the various governors and that the expenses of war shall be repaid to the English treasury through a tax laid by Parliament. At that instant Franklin becomes one hundred per cent patriot. In letter after letter he assails the proposal for a tax laid in a mother country ignorant of American conditions.

"Compelling the colonies to pay money without their consent," he writes, "would be rather like raising contributions in an enemy's country, than taxing of Englishmen for their own public benefit; it would be treating them as a conquered people, and not as true British subjects."

This visit to Boston, however, withdraws the sting from old wounds. The Hub's citizens show him marked respect, causing him to write to Catherine Ray, one of those feminine correspondents whom he had begun to acquire, of his "unwillingness to quit a country in which I drew my first breath, spent my earliest and most pleasant days, and had now received so many fresh marks of the people's goodness and benevolence, in the kind and affectionate treatment I had everywhere met with."

This letter he closes with one of his gallant tributes:

"Persons subject to the *hyp* complain of the northeast wind, as increasing their malady. But since you promised

to send me kisses in the wind, and I find you as good as your word, it is to me the gayest wind that blows, and gives me the best spirits. I write this during a northeast storm of snow, the greatest we have had this winter. Your favors come mixed with the snowy fleeces, which are as pure as your virgin innocence, white as your lovely bosom, and — as cold. But let it warm towards some worthy young man, and may Heaven bless you both with every kind of happiness."

II

There ensues a period of wrangles between governors and assemblies as to the raising of funds for defense. Governor Hamilton quits Pennsylvania and is succeeded by Morris, a character whom Franklin afterwards wrote about lovingly. He counsels Morris not to dispute with the Assembly.

"My dear friend," says Morris, "how can you advise my avoiding disputes? You know I love disputing; it is one of my greatest pleasures."

Later Franklin as a legislator is drawn into these broils and assists in writing tart and even abusive letters to the governor. Morris remains genial. He meets Franklin in the street one day and takes him home to have a laugh over a glass of wine with a merry company. Morris remarks that he admires Sancho Panza, "who, when it was proposed to give him a government, requested it might be a government of *blacks,* as then, if he could not agree with his people, he might sell them."

"Franklin," asks a member of the company, "why do you continue to side with these damned Quakers? Had you not better sell them? "

"The governor," says Franklin, "has not yet *blacked* them enough."

Morris lasts only for a time. He is succeeded by Denny. Meantime Massachusetts proposes to attack the French fort at Crown Point. Edmund Quincy comes down to ask help from Pennsylvania. The governor refuses his assent to a grant of ten thousand pounds unless the estates of the Proprietaries and their hangers-on are exempted from tax. Franklin is compelled to get the money from the provincial loan office.

"These public quarrels," he wrote, "were all at bottom owing to the Proprietaries, our hereditary governors, who, when any expense was to be incurred for the defense of their province, with incredible meanness instructed their deputies to pass no act for levying the necessary taxes, unless their vast estates were in the same act expressly excused."

III

From these activities Franklin is diverted by the arrival in Virginia of a worthy but fatuous individual who has been sent from England to show the colonials how to fight. It is General Edward Braddock. A man less fitted for his mission was never selected by any ponderous governmental machine. He is to lead one wing of a tripartite expedition against the French and their Indian allies. With his two regiments of regular British troops, assisted by forces from Maryland and Virginia, the latter under the young Colonel George Washington, he is to attack and take Fort Du Quesne, on the site of what is now Pittsburgh.

On landing at Alexandria, Braddock marches to Fredericktown, Maryland, where he halts and vents two loud complaints, one against his government for sending him into such a horrible country without proper supplies, and the other against the American provinces for not having ready the 150 wagons necessary for moving his baggage. The

General does not know that few American farmers are able to own such a luxurious article as a wagon.

Franklin, under the guise of perfecting postal communications, is sent down to mollify him. He takes along his son William. On the journey Franklin leaves the road to make some scientific observations regarding the curious conduct of a whirlwind. He rides along with it for nearly a mile, vainly attempting to break it by striking through it with his whip. He afterwards wrote Peter Collinson a long letter about it. Franklin asked his host if such whirlwinds were common in Maryland. The reply was, "Not at all common; but we got this on purpose to treat Mr. Franklin."

On reaching Braddock's tent, Franklin finds the General, red with spleen and prejudice, cursing Virginia and Maryland because they have sent him but 25 wagons. Franklin ventures to remark that Pennsylvania might do better. Braddock turns to him eagerly.

"Then you, sir, who are a man of interest there, can probably procure them for us; and I beg you will undertake it."

It is this meeting which is described in Thackeray's novel, "The Virginians." Franklin is referred to there as "the little postmaster of Philadelphia."

Franklin undertakes the commission, and by appealing to the cupidity and fears of the farmers of Lancaster, York and Cumberland counties in a series of advertisements, raises a complete outfit of horses, wagons, and drivers within twenty days. He is compelled to advance heavy sums out of his own pocket to do so, and in addition to sign bonds.

Braddock now expands and begins to treat Franklin almost as an equal. He even invites him to dinner.

"After taking Fort Du Quesne," he says complacently, "I am to proceed to Niagara; and having taken that, to Frontenac, if the season will allow, and I suppose it will;

for Du Quesne can hardly detain me above three or four days; and then I see nothing that can obstruct my march to Niagara."

Franklin and Col. Washington warn him against possible Indian ambushes. They urge him to throw out an advance screen of friendly Indian scouts, about a hundred of which have been procured for him. Braddock smiles indulgently; are not his advisers aware that the brunt of the battle is to be borne by regular British troops, dressed in gaiters and scarlet tunics?

"These savages may, indeed, be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia, but upon the king's regular and disciplined troops, sir, it is impossible that they should make any impression."

The sequel is sufficiently known. Within a few miles of the fort Braddock's army is attacked by invisible foes on front and flanks. His officers, with their train of pack horses laden with beautiful spare uniforms, are wiped out. His huddled soldiers are riddled. His secretary is killed. As yells of panic arise and horses are cut loose from their traces, the general himself falls mortally wounded. The whole campaign ends in a fiasco. The owners of the teams sue Franklin for their losses. His claims are not settled till months afterward, and he never collects the full amount due him.

Braddock dies saying, "Who would have thought it?" But he has meanwhile spoken a good word to London about Franklin's able efforts, and when Thomas Penn complains to the Secretary of State that Franklin "is not to be depended upon to assist in promoting the public service," he receives small attention.

The Braddock defeat leaves Franklin in a thorny situation and for a time he is called ugly names. The farmers are enraged at the conduct of their defenders from overseas,

who have plundered and stripped the countryside, leaving some poor families ruined and humiliated. They pour in their claims until Franklin finds himself obligated in the sum of 20,000 pounds, to pay which would have ruined him. No wonder he afterwards wrote:

"*There never was a good war, or a bad peace.*"[1]

But when public opinion veers and the Assembly gives him a vote of thanks, he is again in good humor.

When Catherine Ray writes him in this same year, 1755: "How do you do? What are you doing, Does everybody still love you? And how do you make them do it?" he replies:

. . . "As to the second question, I must confess (but don't you be jealous) that many more people love me now than ever did before: for, since I saw you I have been enabled to do some general services to the country, and to the army, for which both have thanked and praised me, and say they love me. They say so, as you used to do; and if I were to ask any favors of them, they would, perhaps, as readily refuse me; so that I find little real advantage in being beloved, but it pleases my humor."

IV

Braddock's downfall brings about a renewal of the quarrel between the Proprietaries and the Pennsylvania Assembly. The Indians, heartened by success and athirst for revenge, massacre settlers within 80 miles of Philadelphia. Bethlehem, Lancaster, and Easton are threatened. The agitation for defense arises to fever heights, but the Proprietaries remain firm on one point. Whatever lands are taxed, theirs are to be exempted. But finally Franklin, by sending word to England of their meanness, attacks the

[1] Letter to Josiah Quincy, Sept. 11, 1783.

Penns in the rear. They give way — partly, and offer to add 5000 pounds to any sum appropriated by the Assembly. As the Indian depredations have increased, the Assembly temporarily waives a tax on the proprietary estates, and votes 60,000 pounds. Franklin is appointed on the commission to spend it.

He prepares a bill for raising volunteers. It exempts the Quakers. Non-Quakers resent this and declare they will not enlist. Franklin takes a hand in the controversy by publishing in the *Gazette* "a Dialogue between X, Y, and Z concerning the present State of Affairs in Pennsylvania."

Says Z: "I am no coward, but hang me if I fight to save the Quakers."

X replies: "That is to say, you will not pump ship because it will save the rats as well as yourself."

The dialogue closes with an appeal to all parties to "unite in our country's cause, in which to die is the sweetest of all deaths, and may the God of armies bless our honest endeavors."

As the volunteers come forward, word comes of a massacre at the Moravian village of Gnadenhutten, in Northampton County. The governor asks Franklin to accept a military commission and proceed there to protect what remains of the inhabitants. Franklin accepts and becomes General Franklin. As his aide he selects his son William. Fortified by stout wraps knit by the faithful Deborah, the General leads his little army northward through the frozen forest. They are a month covering ninety miles. He puts heart and a yearning for cash into his volunteers by offering $40 for each Indian scalp, "produced with proper Attestations," and a gill of rum each per day, served half in the morning and half in the evening.

They prove to be earnest soldiers, and are prompt in attending to everything except divine service. The chaplain

complains about it. Franklin make one of his canniest suggestions:

"Deal out the rum just after prayers."

The worthy brother, seeing a great light, accepts the job as bar-tender, assisted by a few willing hands.

"Never," says Franklin sententiously, "were prayers more generally and more punctually attended."

He finds the situation at Gnadenhutten serious enough. It has been burnt down. Around the silent ruins lie bodies gnawed by animals. He sets to work to fortify the place, which he names Fort Allen. He is strengthened in this task by supplies arriving from Deborah, who well knows the way to a general's heart. They consist of roast beef, roast veal, apples, and that foundation stone of American liberty, mince pie. The men get along on salt pork and bread.

Their commander notices something curious about his soldiers. When they are at work they are good-natured, and spend their evenings in cheerful conversation and song, but when the weather compels them to remain idle, they become quarrelsome and fault-finding. This reminds Franklin of a sea captain whose one aim was to keep his men at work. One day when the mate reported that all tasks had been completed and there was nothing more for the men to do, the captain's reply was prompt:

"*Oh, make them scour the anchor.*"

Within two months Franklin has enough of military service. When a Col. Clapham arrives to visit the fort, General Franklin hastily bestows on him his commission and returns to Philadelphia, to which he has been summoned on account of new quarrels with the Proprietaries. At home he is acclaimed as a great leader, and the governor urges him to lead an army against Fort Du Quesne. This Franklin modestly declines. However, he accepts an honorary

post as colonel to a new Philadelphia regiment, which boasts of six brass field-pieces. It parades in his honor and even follows him home. As a parting salute it fires several rounds in front of Franklin's door with such enthusiasm that they shake down his electrical apparatus and break the glasses.

V

In 1756 the continuous disputes between the Assembly and the governor, who acts in all cases as the deputy of Thomas and Richard Penn, reach a crisis.

The Penns have become more and more arrogant. Though under the terms of the grant of 26,000,000 acres made to their father, they have become the possessors of an estate worth $50,000,000, they still refuse to submit to taxation for defense against the Indians, saying "that is no affair of ours." At last they signify that they will receive no more direct addresses from the legislature. Franklin then attacks them in his most outspoken and satiric fashion. This draws on him the ill-will of the Philadelphia upper-class, then almost entirely Tory in sentiment. They virtually impose a social boycott on Franklin and his family. Washington, Jefferson, and Hamilton in their day are entertained in Philadelphia drawing-rooms, but never Franklin.

Finally the Assembly, tired of the rows with Governor Denny, passes a bill designed to raise funds by an excise on wine, rum, and brandy. They suppose this will be unobjectionable. But the governor refuses his assent, saying that he is bound to do so by his instructions, meaning those of the Penns in England.

The assemblymen attempt no further measures, but vote to present their grievance against the Penns to the king himself. They name two commissioners to go to England for this purpose. They are the Speaker, A. Isaac Norris,

FRENCH STATUETTE BY NINI OF FRANKLIN EXPERIMENTING WITH HIS ELECTRICAL APPARATUS

and Franklin. Norris declines owing to his age, and Franklin offers to go alone. To pay his expenses, the sum of 1500 pounds is voted. Franklin at once prepares to sail, taking along the inevitable William.

He sends his stores to be put on board a ship at New York, but before he departs, Lord Loudoun, commander in chief of the British forces in America, arrives to have a word with him.

This noble lord was one of the most ludicrous figures ever inflicted by a British government on a meek and prayerful colony. In character he was a combination of Sir William Keith and General Braddock, but having the likable qualities of neither. Franklin wondered " how such a man came to be intrusted with so important a business." The only proper place for him would have been in the middle of a Gilbert and Sullivan comic opera.

Loudoun asks the governor and Franklin to meet him in conference. There he requests Franklin to help him patch up an understanding. Franklin yields and prepares a new bill for the Assembly, which is passed with the assertion that the province thereby yields none of its rights. Triumphantly his lordship sails away, blandly accepting all the credit for Franklin's work. Meantime the ship at New York has sailed with Franklin's stores on board.

He finds another ship early in April. But since it cannot sail without Lord Loudoun's permission, it remains in the Hudson until nearly the end of June, awaiting his lordship's dispatches. For eleven weeks of warm weather this noble cunctator keeps Franklin kicking the sides of his ship. At last permission is grandly given and Franklin's ship, with two other packets, is requested to join the English fleet waiting outside and attend Loudoun's ship until he writes a certain letter. Five days pass before his lordship's letter is ready and Benjamin's ship can steer for England. Mean-

time his lordship sails on to Louisburg, which he is to besiege; but he changes his mind, turns around and sails right back again, bringing with him the whole fleet with its troops on board and the two packets, with its passengers, which were to have sailed with Franklin's ship to England.

Franklin is five months reaching Falmouth from Philadelphia, but the actual crossing occupies only about 30 days. His ship is slow at first but picks up speed noticeably after her human and other freight have been shifted aft. This incident sets Franklin wondering whether more attention should not be paid to the scientific loading and sailing of ships. He afterwards prepares a paper on the subject.

Off Falmouth harbor the ship barely escapes crashing into rocks on which rests a lighthouse. Its glare saves them in time. When they land the next day, Franklin breaks his usual habit and goes to church. He gives thanks for being alive. He also vows to promote the building of lighthouses in America when he returns. He thinks that will be soon. He does not know he will not see home again for five years.

Chapter XXI

Conquests in England

I

IT was doubtless a contented Franklin who looked out on the streets of London on the morning of July 27, 1757. Thirty years previously he had left the murky old town as an unknown and unsuccessful youth. He now returns with his head held high. Men distinguished in science, literature and politics hasten forward to do him honor. He is a guest at the splendid home of Peter Collinson. Come Dr. Fothergill, author of the preface to the London pamphlet on Franklin's electrical experiments; Governor Shirley of Massachusetts; William Strahan, printer and publisher to Dr. Samuel Johnson, who is glad to welcome his best American customer; and finally, grinning slyly, James Ralph, Benjamin's erstwhile chum. Ralph lets it be known that he has done rather well for himself. He is a political writer selling his services for fat fees, has had the patronage of the Duke of Bedford, and has been honored by a denunciation in Pope's Dunciad.

To make himself comfortable while he waits to hear from the Penns, Franklin, with " Billy " and a white and a negro servant, finds quarters at No. 7 Craven Street, between the Strand on one side and the Thames on the other. The house is kept by Mrs. Margaret Stevenson, who at once makes the philosopher so comfortable that in later years he was never able to speak of her housekeeping without a sigh. Mrs. Stevenson's home has another great attraction — her lively daughter, Mary, better known as " Polly."

With mother and daughter Franklin maintained a life-long friendship and correspondence. For them he did some of his sprightliest bits of writing, and for years they were delighted to make the whole household revolve around the great and jocund American.

It becomes quickly evident to Franklin that he may as well make himself comfortable, for the very first statement made to him by an English statesman indicates that he has a long fight ahead. Lord Granville, to whom he is taken, informs him that the king's instructions to his governors in America are "the law of the land, for the king is legislator of the colonies."

Franklin is taken aback. "I told his lordship," he writes, "this was new doctrine to me."

His first meeting with the Penns is at Thomas Penn's house in Spring Garden. They propose that he put in writing the substance of the Pennsylvania Assembly's grievances. He does so. They hand the paper to their solicitor, one Paris, who treats Franklin with such haughtiness that Franklin announces he will deal in future with no one but the two principals. Their reply is sent not to Franklin but to the Assembly. It complains of Franklin's rudeness and demands that the Assembly send as their envoy "a person of candour."

Tedious delays convince Franklin that he will get nowhere with the stiff-necked Penns, and he turns his attention to the English politicians. He has little better success. Politicians are preoccupied with bigger games; they have no time for remote and insignificant little America. William Pitt, the Great Commoner, refuses even to see him. Pitt is too busy enjoying the adulation heaped upon him for the British victories over the French in Canada and India.

"I admired him at a distance," writes Franklin, "and made no more attempts for a nearer acquaintance. I had

only once or twice the satisfaction of hearing, through Lord Shelburne, and, I think, Lord Stanhope, that he did me the honor of mentioning me sometimes as a person of respectable character."

Meantime Franklin is stricken with a severe illness, which keeps him in bed for eight weeks. His friend Dr. Fothergill tenderly ministers to him with horrible infusions of bark.

"I took so much bark in various ways," writes Franklin, "that I began to abhor it."

Nature finally revolts and rids his system of the learned doctor's nostrums. He gradually mends and resumes his war on the Proprietaries. But he makes small headway. It is a year before he is able to extract a statement out of the Penns and another year before he succeeds in getting the Pennsylvania viewpoint before English public opinion. To do this he exercises all his arts as a master propagandist. He writes pieces for the English papers and guides William into doing likewise. He pays for insertion when necessary. He and "Billy" prepare an extensive *Historical Review* of the long quarrel between the Pennsylvania Assembly and the governors, beginning with William Penn's day. William does the writing while his father supervises the work and supplies the documents. Franklin then sends a copy to every public man in England and America, to the English periodicals, and to the bookshops at home.

II

While he awaits the next move from his adversaries, he diverts himself with those agreeable occupations in which he takes most delight. He spends gay evenings with the two ladies of the house and grave ones with the philosophers and scientists who visit him or invite him to their homes.

He is ready alike for a song and a glass of wine, or a solemn discourse on the reason for and the origin of things. He has vast sport with the new and powerful electrical apparatus which he has set up in the Craven Street house.

One day he sees a new musical instrument called the Armonica, constructed from the "musical glasses" which give forth a sound when rubbed. He is enchanted, and at once has built for himself a new and improved instrument on which he gives concerts for the benefit of friends. This induces sundry reflections on the meaning and theory of music. He is not long in discovering that music and poetry, instead of being twin sisters, are bitter rivals, and that each lives with difficulty in the presence of the other. He wishes to make the melody of a song serve the words and when he finds the music of such masters as Handel overwhelming the words, he condemns the composers of the time. He clung to his beloved Armonica all the rest of his life, and it is preserved in Philadelphia to this day.

From this he turns his attention to the foulness of London's streets and submits to Dr. Fothergill a proposal "for the more effectual cleaning and keeping clean the streets of London and Westminster." He would have the dust swept up early in the morning before the shops are open — a revolutionary proposal — but he is convinced that it is a practical one; "for," he writes, "in walking thro' the Strand and Fleet Street one morning at seven o'clock, I observ'd there was not one shop open, tho' it had been daylight and the sun up above three hours; the inhabitants of London choosing voluntarily to live much by candle-light, and sleep by sunshine, and yet often complain, a little absurdly, of the duty on candles, and the high price of tallow."

This is probably the germ of the daylight-saving theory which Franklin aired at more length in Paris later, and is

the cause of his receiving the credit for the daylight-saving laws of the present day.

In the summer of 1758 Franklin takes "Billy" on a tour of the provinces. This is done probably with a view to the improvement of Billy's mind. William is now a law student in the Middle Temple of the Inns of Court, intending to return to Philadelphia as a barrister. He takes readily to social life in London, and Strahan, the printer who has become Franklin's worshiping friend, thinks of him as a son-in-law, pronouncing him, in a letter to Mrs. Franklin, "one of the prettiest young gentlemen I ever knew from America."

This opinion is shared by others, notably by a London young woman, to this day unknown, who suddenly presents William, the natural son, with a natural son of his own. Thus does Franklin, at the age of 54, become a grandfather. Grandfather Benjamin is in no way disconcerted. He tranquilly welcomes the little stranger, has him tenderly brought up, names him William Temple Franklin, and when the lad is old enough, makes him his companion and secretary. It is through this same young man that the world receives, years after his grandfather's death, the famous *Autobiography*.

III

In the course of their tour Benjamin and Billy visit the University of Cambridge, where the grandfather hobnobs happily with the professors, and shows one of them, Dr. Hadley, of the chair of chemistry, a few tricks in the reduction of temperatures by the evaporation of ether. From there they go to visit their ancestral home in Northamptonshire, where only 30 miles away is Sulgrave, once the home of John Washington, grandfather of the renowned George.

The next year Benjamin and Billy have six glorious weeks in Scotland, receive the freedom of the city of Edinburgh, and are entertained by notabilities everywhere, including Hume, Robertson, and Lord Kames. The tour is crowned by the conferring upon Franklin of a doctor's degree by the University of St. Andrews. Franklin received these honors with a beaming pride.

"On the whole," he wrote to Lord Kames in Scotland, "I must say I think the time we spent there was six weeks of the *densest* happiness I have met with in any part of my life."

Amid these pleasures, however, he assures Deborah, who firmly resists all of William Strahan's efforts to tempt her to London, that he wishes he were home. He writes her:

"The regard and friendship I meet with from persons of worth, and the conversation of ingenious men, give me no small pleasure; but, at this time of life, domestic comforts afford the most solid satisfaction, and my uneasiness at being absent from my family, and longing desire to be with them, make me often sigh in the midst of cheerful company."

Deborah writes him constantly and voluminously, and he replies with spoil from the London shops. In one letter he mentions the following consignment:

China cups and bowls.

Four silver salt ladles, "newest, but ugliest fashion."

"A little instrument to core apples."

"Another to make little turnips out of great ones."

"Six course diaper breakfast cloths."

"A little basket, a present from Mrs. Stevenson to Sally, and a pair of garters for you, which were knit by the young lady, her daughter, who favored me with a pair of the same kind, the only ones I have been able to wear, as they need not be bound tight, the ridges in them preventing their

slipping. . . . Goody Smith may, if she pleases, make such for me hereafter. My love to her."

Carpeting "for the best room floor."

"Two large fine Flanders bedticks."

Two pair of large superfine blankets.

Two fine damask tablecloths and napkins.

Forty-three ells of Ghentish sheeting Holland.

56 yards of cotton, "printed curiously from copper plates."

7 yards of chair bottoms, "printed in the same way, very neat. These were my fancy; but Mrs. Stevenson tells me I did wrong not to buy both of the same color."

7 yards of printed cotton, blue ground, "to make you a gown. I bought it by candlelight, and liked it then, but not so well afterwards. If you do not fancy it, send it as a present from me to sister Jenny."

"A better gown for you, of flowered tissue, 16 yards, of Mrs. Stevenson's fancy, cost nine guineas."

Snuffers, snuffstand, and extinguisher. "The extinguisher is for spermaceti candles only, and is of a new contrivance, to preserve the snuff upon the candle."

"Some music Billy bought for his sister."

"Some pamphlets for the Speaker and for Susy Wright."

"A mahogany and a little shagreen box, with microscopes and other optical instruments loose, are for Mr. Alison, if he likes them; if not, put them in my room till I return."

Two sets of books, "a present from me to Sally, *The World* and *The Connoisseur*."

7 pair of silk blankets, very fine. "You will excuse the soil on some of the folds; your neighbor Foster can get it off."

1 beer jug.

A notation regarding the latter explains that "it has the

coffee cups in its belly, packed in best crystal salt, of a peculiar nice flavor, for the table, not to be powdered."

But by the time this letter saw print in the works of Jared Sparks and James Parton, the fleshly word "belly" had been edited out. The eighteenth century could use the word; but the nineteenth resolutely refused to admit that people had such things.

IV

Three years pass and Franklin still waits in London. Then the Pennsylvania Assembly returns to the attack and passes "An Act for granting to his Majesty the sume of £100,000." It provides a sinking fund by "a tax on all estates." The Penns instantly hurl their legal battalions against it and demand its repeal. A committee of the Privy Council for Plantation Affairs in London report on it as "manifestly offensive to natural justice, to the laws of England, and to the royal prerogative." Franklin employs counsel and furnishes them with able arguments against the repeal. His contentions are so convincing that the lords of the committee waver. They offer to make a second and different report if Franklin will agree to certain amendments. The result is a compromise. The unsurveyed lands of the Penns are not taxed, but the surveyed lands are. It is a partial victory for Franklin; the stiff-necked and parsimonious Penns lose some of their prerogative and are compelled to accept the principle of a tax.

Franklin's friends back home rejoice and the Assembly votes him thanks, but the proprietary party attacks his name and reputation with ferocity. Deborah writes him disturbed letters. He replies:

"I am concerned that so much trouble should be given you by idle reports concerning me. Be satisfied, my dear, that while I have my senses, and God vouchsafes me his

protection, I shall do nothing unworthy the character of an honest man, and one that loves his family."

The year is 1760. Quebec and Montreal have been taken, and France loses Canada and Guadeloupe to the victorious English. Franklin writes a pamphlet urging the retention of Canada, for there is actually a party which prefers Guadeloupe. Before the year is out, a frightful calamity befalls the conquering English: George III ascends the throne.

V

Franklin lingers on in London, enjoying his social and political triumphs. His leisure he employs in scientific experiments, arriving at conclusions which he puts in long letters to friends. Polly Stevenson, for instance, on a visit to the country receives one relating an experiment with squares of colored cloth laid on the snow on a sunny morning. The black squares, having absorbed the sun's rays, have sunk into the snow, but the white one remains unaffected. From this Franklin deduces that all summer clothes should be white, while garden walls should be painted black to retain the heat for the benefit of fruit trees and vines.

In 1761 he and William visit Germany and the Netherlands. The next year Oxford University makes Franklin a D.C.L. and Billy an M.A. In the same year William, now 32 years old, is appointed Governor of New Jersey and soon afterwards marries Miss Elizabeth Downes, of the West Indies. He returns home to take up his official residence at Burlington, only a few miles across the river from his father's home.

When at last Franklin obtains a ship home, his English friends sent him affectionate farewells. David Hume remarks that America has sent England many good things, but only one philosopher. To Polly Stevenson Franklin

writes: "I fancy I feel a little like dying saints, who in parting with those they love in this world, are only comforted with the hope of more perfect happiness in the next. . . . Adieu, my dear good girl."

On the voyage he passes the time with more observations, notably the tranquilizing effect of oil on water. His attention to this is attracted by the behavior of a lamp. On arriving at Philadelphia, he finds the pleased city has made him its representative in the Assembly. Friends crowd the house to congratulate him on his achievements abroad.

He is 57 years old. He has become so round as to be portly. He no longer moves around with the old energy, but loves to linger at the table and to sit at his desk instead of exercising. Once more he dreams of a tranquil leisure, during which he can observe the curiosities of the natural world, chat with old friends, watch Sally moving to and fro, and begin his long-contemplated work on "The Art of Virtue." He writes to his friend Dr. Fothergill in London:

"By the way, when do you intend to live? i.e., to enjoy life? When will you retire to your villa, give yourself repose, delight in viewing the operations of nature in the vegetable creation, assist her in her works, get your ingenious friends at times about you, make them happy with your conversation and enjoy their society; or if alone, amuse yourself with your books and elegant collections?

"To be hurried about perpetually from one sick chamber to another is not living. Do you please yourself with the fancy that you are doing good? You are mistaken. Half the lives you save are not worth saving, as being useless, and almost all the other half ought not to be saved, as being mischievous. . . ."

It is a long time before Franklin himself can enjoy that repose which he recommends. Impending are labors beside which his former exertions will appear trifling.

Chapter XXII

Political Slings and Arrows

I

IN December, 1763, occurs one of the first of those outbursts of mob fury which have since become so common in American history and which, nearly always directed against the weak and unprotected, have so often grown into wholesale exhibitions of cowardice and bestiality.

The Indians of Pennsylvania, fired by rum and made cunning by contact with the white man, are for the most part a desperate lot, but among them are harmless tribes living in entire amity with the peaceful Quakers and Moravians. Among them is the remnant of a tribe of Conestogas living near Lancaster. There are only twenty of them, men, women and children. Early one morning a mounted band known as "the Paxton boys" surrounds their village and sets fire to it. Only six Indians are found at home. These are butchered.

Here and there a horrified protest is made, but most of the inhabitants approve the deed. Religious circles are silent when not openly commendatory. The authorities do nothing. However, the Lancaster magistrates collect the fourteen unbutchered Indians into the workhouse. The Paxton boys return to the blood-feast. A hundred of them break into the workhouse and slaughter the women and children as well as the men, carefully detaching their scalps in order to collect the provincial bounty.

The perpetrators are never found, never molested. The deed is regarded as an incident in a necessary and holy cru-

sade, a virtuous clean-up campaign. Thus is set up one of those precedents which have virtually guaranteed immunity to mobs ever since, not only in Pennsylvania but in practically all other American States.

Thus encouraged, the Paxton boys, believing themselves latter-day Joshuas, draw to themselves new and thirsty recruits. Meantime Indians are taken to Philadelphia for protection. They are sent under escort to New York. The governor there refuses them admission and they have to march back to Philadelphia. The Paxton mob announces that it is coming to get them. The frightened governor, John Penn, runs to Franklin, takes refuge in his house, and gladly leaves the situation for him to deal with.

Franklin issues a blazing pamphlet entitled "A Narrative of the late Massacres, in Lancaster County, of a Number of Indians, Friends of the Province, by Persons Unknown." In this he lays aside his accustomed easy, droll manner, and speaks his mind in unminced words. He assails the mob not only as murderers but as violators of the historic right of sanctuary. He riddles the clergymen who have tried to justify the act as that of God-blessed crusaders. He pleads for more magnanimity towards the helpless. He might as well have used an atomizer on a gorilla. The Paxton mob arrives at Germantown, only seven miles away. Once more Franklin becomes a military commander, organizes a defense force, meets the invaders, and reads them a firm warning. The Paxtons veer off, turn the countryside into a hell, and on their return home are received by their own people as heroes.

"Governor Penn," writes Franklin, "did everything by my advice; so that, for about forty-eight hours, I was a very great man; as I had been once some years before, in a time of public danger."

A little later he notes this change in the situation: "The

fighting face we put on, and the reasonings we used with the insurgents, having turned them back and restored quiet to the city, I became a less man than ever; for I had, by this transaction, made myself many enemies among the populace."

These enemies consist of the respectable classes of the town, including the friends of the Proprietaries and the clergy dependent on them. They are enraged at Franklin's superseding the governor and his treatment of the Paxton "army of the Lord."

Factions arise, and Franklin is alternately praised and cursed. Governor John Penn, grandson of the great William, in a panic signs a proclamation enormously raising the price of Indian scalps, including those of women. His opponents declare that the proprietary government is no longer able to preserve order and put down mobs. A new demand arises for an appeal to George III, to make Pennsylvania a royal province like New York and New Jersey. Governor Penn chooses this moment to reject a bill taxing all estates alike. Bedlam ensues. The Assembly adjourns to consult the people as to a petition to the king. Franklin, when not on committees, finds time to write and print a pamphlet entitled "Cool Thoughts on the Present Situation of our Public Affairs, addressed to a Friend in the Country." It states the case for the Assembly. The legislature, on reassembling, votes to address a petition to the king praying him to make Pennsylvania a royal province. When Speaker Norris, pleading ill health, refuses to sign it, Franklin is chosen in his stead.

II

The fall elections of 1764 come on. Franklin is named on what is called "The Old Ticket" for re-election to the Assembly. A storm of pamphlets for and against the rule

of the Penns floods the city. Franklin issues a satiric "Preface to a Speech" in which he ridicules the attempt of the respectable classes to shelter the Penns under the cloak of "the father, the honored and honorable father."

"The sons," he says, "have been heard to say to each other with disgust, when told that A, B, and C were come to wait upon them with addresses on some public occasion, "*Then I suppose we shall hear more about our father.*"

He proposes an inscription for an imaginary memorial to Thomas and Richard Penn beginning as follows:

"Be this a Memorial
Of T—— and R—— P——,
P—— of P——,
Who, with estates immense,
Almost beyond computation,
When their own province,
And the whole British empire,
Were engaged in a bloody and most expensive war,
Begun for the defense of these estates,
Could yet meanly desire
To have those very estates
Totally or partially
Exempted from taxation . . ."

Franklin's enemies produce a counter-epitaph, shot through with the malicious gossip of the streets and taverns concerning the birth of William:

"An Epitaph &c.
To the much esteem'd Memory of
Benjamin Franklin Esq., LL. D.

. . . . . .

Possessed of many lucrative offices
Procured to him by the Interest of Men whom he infamously treated
And receiving enormous sums from the Province for services
He never performed,
After betraying it to Party Contention,
He lived, as to the Appearance of Wealth in moderate circumstances;
His principal Estate, seeming to consist in his Hand Maid Barbara,
A most valuable Slave,
The Foster Mother of his last offspring who did his dirty work.
And in two angelic Females whom Barbara also served
As Kitchen Wench and Gold Finder, But alas the Loss!
Providence for wise tho' secret ends
Lately deprived him of the Mother of Excellency.
His fortune was not however impaired, for he piously withheld from her Manes
The pitiful stipend of Ten pounds per Annum
On which he had cruelly suffered her To starve,
Then stole her to the Grave in Silence,
Without a Pall, the covering due to her dignity, without a tomb or even a Monumental Inscription."

On election day the Philadelphia conservatives muster every force against Franklin. They are assisted by the Dutch Calvinists and Presbyterians. The Church of England and Dutch Lutheran congregations are divided in sentiment. Most of Franklin's support comes from the Quakers and Moravians.

Franklin is defeated. His fourteen years of loyal service in the Assembly come to an inglorious end in mire and

mud. The majority against him, however, is small. It is only about a score in a total vote of nearly 4000. Franklin accepts his defeat with his usual philosophic calm, but his friends rally around him strongly. They propose him as the Assembly's agent, to present the petition to the king in person. The Proprietary party breaks out into new exclamations of horror. John Dickinson, a Philadelphian of wealth and influence, declares that "no man in Pennsylvania is at this time so much the object of the public dislike as he" and that Franklin is in "the whole world the man most obnoxious to his country." Other opponents paint Franklin as an agitator and disturber of the peace. They charge him with being the author of the other Assembly measures "which have occasioned such uneasiness and distraction among the good people of this province."

Nevertheless he is elected as agent and at once prepares to sail for England for the third time. On November 7, 1764, he is escorted to his ship by three hundred mounted men, and within a month is once more in London, where Margaret and Polly Stevenson stand ready to welcome him back to his old lodgings in Craven Street.

He sends a letter of love and advice back to Sally. "Go constantly to church," he writes. . . . "I do not mean you should despise sermons, even of the preachers you dislike; for the discourse is often much better than the man, as sweet and clear waters come through very dirty earth."

This advice is the more surprising, since the rector of Christ Church, which Deborah and Sally attend, is a bootlicker to the Proprietaries and an enemy of Franklin. Our Benjamin is much like other males of the species: he may not care for sermons himself, but he is not above looking to the church to do police duty over his womenfolk.

Chapter XXIII

In London for the Third Time

I

FRANKLIN quickly finds that he must put on one side the business of getting the Pennsylvania petition into the hands of George III, and assist the other American colonial agents in London in their fight against the Stamp Act, which George Grenville, minister of the treasury, has prepared for action by Parliament. It imposes taxes on fifty-four classes of objects, from almanacs and advertisements to legal papers and college degrees. To scattered farmers living at a distance from towns it threatens to be an unmitigated nuisance, to small tradesmen it is a hardship; but the chief objection of the American colonists is that the taxes are to be imposed by a Parliament in which none of their representatives are permitted to sit. They have already had stamp taxes of their own.

"The first was imposed for one year by Massachusetts in 1755," says John Bach McMaster, "and re-enacted in 1756. The other was passed by New York in December, 1756 . . . It was against stamp duties laid without consent of the colonies that the four London agents protested vigorously on the 2nd of February, 1765."[1]

Protests are indulgently disregarded. Parliament passes the measure by a large majority. Franklin, still the loyal subject, does not seem to be greatly cast down by his defeat.

"I took every step in my power," he wrote, "to prevent

[1] Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters.

the passing of the Stamp Act. But the tide was too strong for us. The nation was provoked by American claims of legislative independence, and all parties joined in resolving by this act to settle the point. We might as well have hindered the sun's setting. That we could not do. But since it is down, my friend, and it may be long before it rises again, let us make as good a night of it as we can. We may still light candles. . . ."

So ready is he to submit that he buys a supply of legal blanks and sends it over to his partner, David Hall, to be stamped and sold in their stationery shop. When he hears that a young burgess named Patrick Henry has introduced in the Virginia Assembly a resolution declaring the exclusive right of that body to tax the inhabitants of the province, he writes to John Hughes, the Philadelphia merchant:

"A firm loyalty to the crown and a faithful adherence to the government of this nation, which it is the safety as well as the honour of the colonies to be connected with, will always be the wisest course for you and I to take."

This being his frame of mind, he falls readily into a trap laid for him by Grenville. The latter asks him to suggest a discreet and reputable man to act as stamp officer in Pennsylvania. Not realizing that this will virtually commit him to approbation of the act, Franklin names John Hughes. He soon hears of the effect at home. Hughes' home is threatened by a mob and he resigns the post. Franklin's enemies in Philadelphia try to provoke an attack on his own home. William hurries over from New Jersey to take the inmates away. Sally consents to go, but not the redoubtable Deborah. She barricades the house, sends for her brother to bring his gun, and prepares to repel invaders. She is still in a belligerent mood when she finds time to write Franklin about it:

"I said, when I was advised to remove, that I was very

sure you had done nothing to hurt anybody, nor had I given any offense to any person at all, nor would I be made uneasy by anybody, nor would I stir and show the least uneasiness, but if anyone came to disturb me I would show a proper resentment."

Nothing could better reveal Debby's confidence in her "Pappy," or her own sturdy and pugnacious nature. Any Philadelphia roughneck with the hardihood to set foot in Pappy's sacred study would doubtless have got not only an earful but a gunful.

II

When the news reaches Franklin that there have been riots in Boston and New York, that the homefolks are resisting the duties, and have even declared a boycott on English manufactures and are busy weaving homemade cloth on handlooms, he realizes that they are taking the situation more seriously than he. Before he can do anything, however, the Grenville ministry falls, an event celebrated with bell-ringing and cannon-firing in Philadelphia. Grenville is succeeded by the Marquis of Rockingham, whose secretary is Edmund Burke, friend of Franklin and of America.

However, the Stamp Act remains in force, and the American colonists, in a fury, adopt more drastic means of showing their resentment. Their measures are remarkably like those adopted in India during the recent *swaraj* agitation culminating in 1925. They pledge themselves to wear homespun, to import no English manufactured goods, and to eat no lamb in order to encourage the growing of American wool. Spinning and knitting become the fashion. Citizens boast of being dressed from head to foot in homemade goods. Legal proceedings are abandoned and disputes are settled by private arbitration. Stamped papers are destroyed wherever found. Franklin's newspaper, the

Gazette, announces that no stamped paper is to be had and even changes its title for a short period to "Remarkable Occurrences."

Franklin himself, despite his non-approval of the Stamp Act, still remains the loyal British subject. Aware of this, his political enemies at home make capital of it and accuse him, as a royal jobholder, of secretly working against his country's interest. A political versifier issues this quatrain:

> "All his designs concenter in himself.
> For building castles and amassing pelf.
> The public 'tis his wit to sell for gain,
> Whom private property did ne'er maintain."

In England the boycott on imported goods and the attempts of the Americans to set up small factories of their own cause sundry quakings. Tall stories appear in that portion of the London press dominated by the industrialists concerning the attempts of the colonies to become independent of English factories. The Tory press, catering to the feudal land-owners, tries to allay such fears by scouting the possibility of the rise of industry in America.

Franklin is well aware that there are certain kinds of human foolishness which cannot be dealt with seriously. He therefore draws his feathered pen, dips it in a bottle filled with ridicule mixed with a little acid, and writes:

". . . Give me leave to instance the various accounts the newspapers have given us, with so much honest zeal for the welfare of *Poor Old England*, of the establishing manufactures in the colonies to the prejudice of those of the kingdom. It is objected by superficial readers, who yet pretend to some knowledge of those countries, that such establishments are not only improbable, but impossible, for that their sheep have but little wool, not in the whole suffi-

cient for a pair of stockings a year to each inhabitant; that, from the universal dearness of labor among them, the working of iron and other materials, except in a few course instances, is impracticable to any advantage.

"Dear sir, do not let us suffer ourselves to be amused with such groundless objections. The very tails of the American sheep are so laden with wool, that each has a little car or wagon on four little wheels, to support and keep it from trailing on the ground. Would they calk their ships, would they even litter their horses with wool, if it were not both plenty and cheap? . . .

"And yet all this is as certainly true as the account said to be from Quebec, in all the papers of last week, that the inhabitants of Canada are making preparations for a cod and whale fishery 'this summer in the upper lakes.' Ignorant people may object, that the upper lakes are fresh, and that cod and whales are salt water fish; but let them know, sir, that cod, like other fish, when attacked by their enemies fly into any water where they can be safest; that whales, when they have a mind to eat cod, pursue them wherever they fly; and that the grand leap of the whale in the chase up the Falls of Niagara is esteemed, by all who have seen it, as one of the finest spectacles in nature."

III

Warned no doubt by letters from home, and encouraged by Burke, Franklin throws himself vigorously into the struggle for repeal of the Stamp Act. For several months, he is "in a continual hurry from morning till night."

At last Parliament in February, 1766, agrees to give a hearing on the subject before a Committee of the Whole House. Men of every rank and calibre who have any kind of connection with America are invited to testify. Chiefest

witness of all is Dr. Franklin. During his long examination Franklin is at his best. He is cool, dignified, poised, and never at a loss for an answer. Burke said the scene reminded him of a master surrounded by a parcel of schoolboys. His friend George Whitefield, the preacher, afterwards wrote:

"Our worthy friend, Dr. Franklin, has gained immortal honor by his behavior at the bar of the House. His answer was always found equal if not superior to the questioner. He stood unappalled, gave pleasure to his friends, and did honor to his country."

There was a reason for the worthy Doctor's good showing. He had thoughtfully provided himself with a few friends in the Commons and had arranged that at the right time they should ask him questions for which he had pat answers ready. In this way he was able to get before British reactionaries the fact that America could supply 300,000 men for a war of defense, and before the North of England trading faction the fact that America annually bought a half million pounds worth of goods from England.

Franklin was asked whether a military force could enforce the Stamp Act. "Suppose a military force sent into America," he replied; "they will find nobody in arms; what are they then to do? They cannot force a man to take stamps who chooses to do without them. They will not find a rebellion: they may indeed make one."

When asked what those colonists would do who found they could not sue for debts due them without using stamped paper, Franklin said:

"I can only judge what other people will think and how they will act by what I feel within myself. I have a great many debts due me in America, and I had rather they should remain unrecoverable by any law than submit to the Stamp Act."

There ensue several days of debate, excitement and intrigue. George III and the court faction set their faces against repeal, but the manufacturing interests, thoroughly scared by the American boycott, bring to bear powerful influences, in which cash plays its part. The Stamp Act is repealed at 4 o'clock on the morning of February 21, 1766.

The news is received in America with public rejoicing. Cheering crowds parade through the streets of Philadelphia. And Franklin's name is extolled to the stars. The Pennsylvania Assembly elects him agent for another year. In October of this year Philadelphia holds another election and the wave of enthusiasm carries Franklin back to his old seat. Sally Franklin scribbles off this note to her brother William in New Jersey:

"Dear Brother — *The Old Ticket forever! We have it by 34 votes! God bless our worthy and noble agent, and all his family,* were the joyful words we were waked with at 2 or 3 o'clock this morning, by the White Oaks. They then gave us three huzzas and a blessing, then marched off. How strong is the cause of truth! We have beat three parties; The Proprietary, the Presbyterians, and the Half-and-Half. . . ."

"As the Stamp Act is at length repealed," writes Franklin to Deborah, "I am willing you should have a new gown."

In England, however, the repeal of the Stamp Act is only a temporary reverse to the Tory party and the next year they return to their old tricks. Under Charles Townsend, Chancellor of the Exchequer, a new tax measure is introduced for the purpose of somehow extracting a revenue out of America. It lays duties on paper, paints, glass and tea, and since it is meant to raise only £40,000 annually, Parliament believes America will not object. But the result

is a new storm of opposition. Franklin's position as a colonial agent becomes more and more difficult. He is able to do little except try to educate English opinion by means of letters to the newspapers signed "Pacificus," "Secundus," "Homespun," etc.

Daily it becomes plainer that the root of the difficulty is the fear in England that America will establish her own factories and set up her own industries. English hatters obtain from Parliament an act restraining the colonists from manufacturing their own hats. English steel-makers induce Parliament to forbid the construction in America of slitting-mills or steel furnaces. Americans are forbidden to import wine, oil or fruit from Portugal except through England.

It was this situation which was the real cause of the Revolutionary War; and the real enemies of American independence were not so much the king and the politicians as the nascent industrial class and the intrenched commission houses of England.

IV

Between his wrestlings with Parliament and with English public opinion, Franklin does not forget to have a good time. As soon as Parliament adjourns for the summer he is among the first to bounce over to the Continent. "Traveling," he once remarked, "is one way of lengthening life, at least in appearance." In 1766 he enjoys himself in Germany and Holland, and the next summer finds him and Sir John Pringle, the queen's physician, gaily dashing off to Paris. In one of his blithest moods Franklin writes to "Polly" Stevenson, who is a little lonely down at an aunt's home in Bromley, Kent:

"I had not been here six days before my Tailor and Perruquier had transformed me into a Frenchman. Only think what a figure I make in a little bag-wig and with naked ears!

They told me I was become twenty years younger and looked very gallant; so being in Paris where the Mode is to be sacredly followed, I was once very near making Love to my Friend's Wife."

Thus revivified, he is moved to notice some particulars regarding the fair inhabitants of France:

"The women we saw at Calais, on the road, at Boulogne, and in the inns and villages were generally of dark complexions; but arriving at Abbeville we found a sudden change, a multitude of both women and men in that place appearing remarkably fair. Whether this is owing to a small colony of spinners, wool combers, and weavers, brought hither from Holland with the woolen manufactory about sixty years ago, or to their being less exposed to the sun than in other places, their business keeping them much within doors, I know not. . . .

"As soon as we left Abbeville, the swarthiness returned. I speak generally; for here are some fair women at Paris, who, I think are not whitened by art. As to rouge, they didn't pretend to imitate nature in laying it on. There is no gradual diminution of the color, from the full bloom in the middle of the cheek to the faint tint near the sides, nor does it show itself differently in different faces. I have not had the honor of being at any lady's toilet to see how it is laid on, but I fancy I can tell you how it is or may be done. Cut a hole of three inches diameter in a piece of paper; place it on the side of your face in such a manner, as that the top of the hole may be just under the eye; then, with a brush dipped in the color, paint face and paper together; so when the paper is taken off, there will remain a round patch of red exactly the form of the hole. This is the mode, from the actresses on the stage upwards through the ranks of ladies to the princesses of the blood; but it stops there, the queen not using it, having in the serenity, complacence,

and benignity that shine so eminently in, or rather through, her countenance, sufficient beauty, though now an old woman, to do extremely well without it."

Follows an account of his meeting with Louis XV, one of the five kings before whom he once boasted that he had stood:

"You see I speak of the queen as if I had seen her; and so I have, for you must know I have been at court. We went to Versailles last Sunday, and had the honor of being presented to the king, Louis XV; he spoke to both of us very graciously and very cheerfully, is a handsome man, has a very lively look, and appears younger than he is. In the evening we were at the *Grand Couvert*, where the family sup in public. The table was half a hollow square, the service gold. When either made a sign for drink, the word was given by one of the waiters: *A boire pour le Roi*, or, *A boire pour la Reine*. Then two persons came from within, the one with wine and the other with water in carafes; each drank a little glass of what he brought, and then put both the carafes with a glass on a salver, and then presented it. Their distance from each other was such, as that other chairs might have been placed between any two of them. An officer of the court brought us up through the crowd of spectators, and placed Sir John so as to stand between the queen and Madam Victoire. The king talked a good deal to Sir John, asking many questions about our royal family; and did me too the honor of taking some notice of me; that is saying enough, for I would not have you think me so much pleased with this king and queen, as to have a whit less regard than I used to have for ours. No Frenchman shall go beyond me in thinking my own king and queen the very best in the world, and the most amiable."

This last sentence is not the least interesting in this inter-

esting letter. It reveals Franklin as still the worshipful provincial, still the devout subject. Franklin the republican is not yet born.

IV

In 1768 comes a change in the ministry which threatens a terrifying disaster to Franklin. Lord Sandwich at one time is almost on the point of depriving him of his postmastership because Franklin is "too much of an Englishman." Since David Hall has ceased his payments of £1000 annually, the purchase of the Franklin & Hall printing business having been completed, a large hole looms in Franklin's income, but the lonely and struggling colony of Georgia comes to the rescue by appointing him its agent at London at £200 a year. New Jersey follows, adding £100. Massachusetts comes next despite the opposition of Samuel Adams, with £400 a year. These sums, added to the £500 which Pennsylvania pays him, are cheerfully received. And he doesn't lose the postmastership after all.

"My enemies were forced," he writes to Jane Mecom, "to content themselves with abusing me plentifully in the newspapers and endeavoring to provoke me to resign. In this they are not likely to succeed, I being deficient in that Christian virtue of resignation. If they would have my office, they must take it."

Thus does he remain faithful to his ancient motto: never to seek an office, and never to resign one.

Chapter XXIV

Franklin Meets the High Priest of the Hell Fire Club

I

THOUGH Franklin was blandly unaware of it, in 1768 he might as well have been an earnest fly trying to butt through a window pane as to get his propaganda successfully before mass opinion in the London of that day. The reason was that, in the world of politics, the London man-in-the-street could see nothing, hear nothing, but the magic, the incandescent, figure of John Wilkes, one of the most astonishing individuals produced by the eighteenth century.

"London was illuminated," wrote Franklin to his friend, Joseph Galloway, "two nights running, at the command of the mob, for the success of Wilkes in the Middlesex election. The second night exceeded anything of the kind ever seen here on the greatest occasions of rejoicing, as even the small cross-streets, lanes, courts, and other out-of-the-way places were all in a blaze with lights, and the principal streets all night long, as the mobs went round again after two o'clock, and obliged people who had extinguished their candles to light them again. Those who refused had all their windows destroyed. The damage done and the expense of candles have been computed at fifty thousand pounds."

That wasn't all the mob did. It made "gentlemen and ladies of all ranks, as they passed in their carriages, to shout

for Wilkes and Liberty, marking the same words on all their coaches with chalk, and No. 45 on every door. . . . I went last week to Winchester, and observed, that for fifteen miles out of town there was scarce a door or window shutter next the road unmarked; and this continued, here and there, quite to Winchester, which is sixty-four miles."

John Wilkes?

Wilkes and Liberty?

No. 45?

These references appear very mysterious, until we begin to investigate. Then we find that the trail leads from Wilkes to Lord Sandwich, whom we have just seen in the act of trying to shunt our worthy Doctor out of his good job in the Philadelphia postoffice. Lord Sandwich's assistant is Sir Francis Dashwood, afterwards Lord le Despencer and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Lord le Despencer is the so-called great libertine with whom Franklin solemnly produced a revision of the English Book of Common Prayer.

At this point we must quote from another letter of Franklin's addressed to son William:

"I was down at Lord le Despencer's when the post brought that day's papers. Paul Whitehead was there, too, who runs early through all the papers and tells the company what he finds remarkable. He had them in another room, and we were chatting in the breakfast parlor, when he came running into us, out of breath, with the paper in his hand. 'Here!' says he, 'here's news for ye. Here's the King of Prussia claiming a right to this kingdom!' All stared, and I as much as anybody; and he went on to read it. When he had read two or three paragraphs a gentleman present said, 'Damn his impudence; I dare say we shall hear by next post that he is upon his march with one hundred thousand men to back this.' Whitehead, who is very

shrewd, soon after began to smoke it, and looking in my face, said, 'I'll be hanged if this is not some of your American jokes upon us.' The reading went on, and ended with abundance of laughing, and a general verdict that it was a fair hit; and the piece was cut out of the paper and preserved in my lord's collection."

We may be sure that amid the laughter no one's was more ventral than Franklin's own; for the "fair hit" was one of the most famous of his own numerous newspaper hoaxes entitled "An Edict of the King of Prussia."

We have now rounded up a group composed of Lord le Despencer, Lord Sandwich, John Wilkes, and Whitehead, with all of whom Franklin has some kind of relation, as yet not defined.

II

Let us go back a few years earlier and imagine that we have come upon this group some dark night in London. They are dressed as if for a fête, but as they come out of a house on a side street they are cloaked and hooded. As they enter a carriage, we overhear a low laugh and a quiet chuckle. We follow them out into the country where heavy trees do silent sentry duty along the banks of the Thames. We arrive at the village of Marlow, in Buckinghamshire. We pass through and take the road to Henley, of boat-race renown. The carriage slows and stops before a ruined and deserted building of an ecclesiastical architecture.

It is Medmenham Abbey, founded by a Cistercian order of monks in 1145 and now the seat of the Hell Fire Club, whose orgies and rites are presided over by the High Priest and Monk Superior, Sir Francis Dashwood.

The club's members number twelve. Besides the quartet mentioned, they include Charles Churchill, Robert Lloyd, Bubb-Dodington, George Selwyn, and at various times Ben

ABIGAIL ADAMS.

WIFE OF JOHN ADAMS, WHO DID NOT APPROVE OF FRANKLIN'S TASTE IN WOMEN FRIENDS.

From an old woodcut.

Bates, Henry Lovibond Collins, Sir William Stanhope, Sir John Dashwood-King, Sir John d'Aubrey, and Thomas Potter.

Of all the numerous rakish clubs founded in England in the eighteenth century, the Hell Fire Club was regarded as the most scandalous. Ascribed to it were the most harrowing blasphemies. Stories concerning it were told by whispers in secluded corners. The prominence and unquestioned talent of its membership made it the target of loose-lipped, and sometimes envious, gossip. The following is from a contemporary chronicle:

"The Hell-Fires, you may guess, aim at a more transcendent malignity, deriding the forms of religion as a trifle with them, by a natural progression from the form they turn to the substance; with Lucifer they fly at Divinity. The third person of the Trinity is what they peculiarly attack; by the following specimen you may judge of their good will: i.e., their calling for a Holy-Ghost-pye at the tavern. . . ."

The shade of this ancient chronicler will forgive us if his horror causes us no more than a smile. Calling for a Holy Ghost pie at a tavern sounds more like the irreverent prank of a modern gang of college students than the deliberate blasphemy of seasoned criminals. The Hell Fire Club undoubtedly contained dissipated and sometimes dissolute men, but it is doubtful if their performances, in the beginning, surpassed those of any high-spirited and reckless young bucks who in any land or age, are prone to react impiously against the respectabilities and confining rigidities of their elders.

Of Dashwood, who was afterwards Franklin's frequent host at his magnificent country place at West Wycombe, Dr. Franklin wrote:

"But a pleasanter thing is the kind countenance, the facetious and very intelligent conversation of mine host, who

having been for many years engaged in public affairs, seen all parts of Europe, and kept the best company in the world, is himself the best existing."

In Lord le Despencer Franklin found the kind of man which he most looked up to. His lordship was elegantly wicked, and so was possessed of a quality which Franklin admired with his whole heart. There can be little doubt that membership in the Hell Fire Club, though perhaps not accepted, would have enticed him irresistibly. We already know how he loved clubs and good company.

The very inscription over the entrance at Medmenham, taken from the Abbey of Thelème described in Rabelais, would have delighted him — *Fay ce que voudras* (Do what you like); for Franklin had been trying to observe that precept ever since he had sold his printing business and ceased, in spirit at least, to be Poor Richard.

Of the whole group the ablest and most brilliant figure was John Wilkes. There was a time when his name was scarcely less revered in Boston and Philadelphia than in London. His memory has a certain additional interest for Americans because a nephew, Charles Wilkes, became an admiral in the United States Navy.

Married in his youth to a woman half again as old as himself and totally dissimilar from her in sentiments, John Wilkes threw himself into the somewhat boisterous dissipations favored in the drawing rooms and clubs of the period. Having gifts as a political writer, he became editor of the *North Briton* in 1762. There he established his name as the "Friend to Liberty" and to the cause of the American colonists. Consequently he made himself hated by George III and the court party. In issue No. 45 of his paper he had the impudence to comment satirically on a Speech from the Throne. He was arrested for libel and imprisoned in the Tower. To put an edge on the case, the prosecution

dragged in a forgotten and privately printed pamphlet, written in his youth, called, as a burlesque on Pope, *Essay on Woman*. A noble lord arose in Parliament and denounced Wilkes as having "violated the most sacred ties of religion as well as decency" by publishing this book. This was no other than the Earl of Sandwich, Wilkes's former fellow member in the Hell Fire Club! Wilkes at length went in exile, to Paris, whence he wrote the tenderest of letters to his daughter "Polly," and became the friend of Beaumarchais, playwright, business man, and friend of Franklin and of America. On returning to England, he was repeatedly rejected from Parliament, but one of fate's little ironies made this haunter of drawing rooms and boudoirs the idol of London's proletariat, and finally he was triumphantly elected Sheriff and then Lord Mayor of London. It was as Lord Mayor in 1775 that he presented to the king a remonstrance against the policy of coercing America. In person he was squint-eyed and unattractive, but made a name for himself as a boundless amorist. He once boasted that with half an hour's start he could win a woman from the best-looking man in the world. Tradition says that it was he who finally broke up the Hell Fire Club by introducing a baboon, dressed like the devil, in the midst of an after-midnight revel.

In genuine evil-doing, the Earl of Sandwich probably outranked any other member of the club. His seductions of women became so notorious that he was named "Jemmie Twitcher," after the seducer of that name in Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*.[1] He insinuated himself into the graces of George III and was promoted rapidly as a diplomat and occupant of high posts. There was high comedy in his turning on Wilkes for writing the *Essay on Woman*, for the pamphlet had been actually dedicated to him and he him-

[1] Dictionary of National Biography.

self had been previously expelled from the Beefsteak Club for blasphemy.[2] As a handy man for George III, it was not surprising that he arose in Parliament one day and denounced Franklin as "one of the bitterest and most mischievous enemies this country has ever known."

Paul Whitehead was an amiable loafer, minor poet, and hanger-on of men more highly placed in the world. Franklin's account of him as a reader and clipper of newspapers for Lord le Despencer indicates his character. Until he married money and got a small post from Dashwood, he lived by his wits and by doing political hack writing similar to that by which James Ralph, Franklin's friend, earned a tainted livelihood. The people who liked Whitehead held Dashwood responsible for getting him into bad habits. He was a pet aversion of Dr. Samuel Johnson, and was also despised by his fellow "Hell Fire" member, Churchill, who wrote this couplet about him:

"May I (can worse disgrace on Manhood fall?)
Be born a Whitehead and baptized a Paul!"

But he died peacefully among suburban neighbors who respected him. His will requested that his heart be removed and given to Lord le Despencer. He bequeathed £50 for a marble urn to contain it. Lord le Despencer, with his strong dramatic sense, interred the heart to the accompaniment of music and appropriate ceremonies in the mausoleum which he had caused to be built on his beautiful West Wycombe grounds.

Churchill was a former curate, a satiric poet of some consequence during his time, and an ardent friend and political supporter of Wilkes. His invective gifts earned him many enemies, including Hogarth, the painter, and Dr. Johnson, whom Churchill crowned with the name "Pomposo." He

[2] Lives of the Rakes, by E. Beresford Chancellor.

lived briefly and fiercely. He wrote his own inscription for his grave: "Life to the last enjoyed, here Churchill lies."

Robert Lloyd was a young scholar and writer of a fluency too facile to become distinguished. Wilkes wrote of him: "He was content to scamper round the foot of Parnassus on his little Welsh pony, which seems never to have tired." His was an impressionable nature, prone to absorb the color of his associates.

Bubb-Dodington, Lord Melcombe, left behind him a memory flavored with a kind of obscene comedy. He was fat, gross, conceited, in private life a toady, and in public a turn-coat, but always regarded himself as at heart an artist. An uncle left this son of an apothecary named Bubb an immense fortune, a great part of which the recipient spent on the erection of a gigantic villa, the very dream of a nabob in stone and marble, in which the purple-jowled owner slept in a gilded bed canopied with peacocks' feathers. He lived to bask in the sun of King George's court. When, on the occasion of the royal marriage, he bent low to kiss the hand of Queen Charlotte, he burst the fastenings of his lilac-tinted silk trousers, but survived to a hale old age.[3]

George Selwyn was a wit, gambler, and man-about-town. When he attended a session of Parliament it was always to sleep tranquilly. He had two great passions: one was for his adopted daughter, Maria Fagniani; the other was for executions and the sight of dead bodies. His sayings were famous. When in his presence someone wondered at the marriage of Lord North to the enormously fat widow of the Earl of Rockingham, he remarked: "Oh, she had been kept on ice three days before the wedding!"[4]

Sir William Stanhope was another member of the Hell Fires who had a wit, but of a somewhat dryer kind. At the

[3] The Lives of the Rakes, by E. Beresford Chancellor.

[4] *Idem.*

coronation of George III, he objected to the removal of a table of the Knights of the Bath, to whom he belonged, on the ground that "some of us are gentlemen here."

The remaining members of the Hell Fire Club seem to have been minor and undistinguished personages, but we have already said enough concerning their companions to indicate what they were like. Franklin arrived in London for his third visit too late to have been admitted to membership, the club having been dissolved when Dashwood became Lord le Despencer in 1762; but there can be little doubt that he would have rejoiced in the company of the other members almost as much as in that of his lordship. Wit, clubbability, free-thinking, and bold gallantry — these were attributes that ever fascinated the provincial Franklin.

There was another associate member or visitor to the club, who perhaps fascinated Franklin even more. This was Eon de Beaumont, known as the Chevalier d'Eon, soldier of France, writer, poet, and diplomat, the secret of whose real sex agitated for years the gossips of the chancelleries of Europe. Indeed, the Hell Fire Club once held a mock trial to determine this very point. D'Eon was living in exile in London while Franklin was there, and there is evidence that they became friends.

The mystery concerning d'Eon involved, as an old French biography puts it, "the imperious circumstances which one day compelled him to conceal his sex." What those strange circumstances were has never been authentically disclosed, but the concealment is said to have been by the order of his king, Louis XV, whose secret correspondence with the Empress Elizabeth of Russia was in charge of d'Eon for five years. Early in his career d'Eon was the secret agent and close confidant of the king, but on somehow falling out of favor, he spent an exile of 14 years in England. He was permitted to return to France in 1775.

Two years afterwards, Count Vergennes, of whose later relations with Franklin we shall presently hear, ordered d'Eon at his home in Tonnerre, to "reassume the garments of his sex." The autopsy at his death is said to have revealed d'Eon as unquestionably male.

Bearing on this point, there is a curious letter from d'Eon to Franklin in the files of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia. It was written in Paris in 1778, a year after Count Vergennes had issued his queer order. The following is a translation:

"Monsieur,

"I have been to Passy to have the honor of seeing you and to felicitate you on recent events occurring in America, but you were in Paris. In your absence we drank to your health and to Liberty, at the home of your friend M. le Ray de Chaumont, who was joined by madame his wife and mademoiselle his daughter in extending to me the most agreeable reception. I hope that the health of the Liberty carried by Madlle d'Eon to three places in Versailles results in all the good possible to America. My brother-in-law, the Chevalier O'Gorman, has arrived from Burgundy. He will return next week. He hopes that when next spring you go to Dijon that you will give him the pleasure and honor of stopping with him at Tonnerre. I shall be very happy if I can be present at the same time and there give proofs of the sincere and respectful attachment with which I am

"Your very humble and very obedient servant,

"La Chevalière D'Eon."

It is to be noted that d'Eon's signature is in the feminine. Moreover, in calling himself "servant," he uses not the usual masculine *serviteur* but the feminine *servante*. Also,

on the back of the letter there is this memorandum, apparently in Franklin's handwriting and possibly for filing purposes: "Chevalière D'Eon, 24 jany, 1778" — again the feminine form. This letter heightens the mystery which even to this day is attached to the name of d'Eon.

To the last he dressed in women's clothes, and, clinging to his skirts, even took part in fencing duels. In his later years he was always careful to call himself, as in the above letter, "Mademoiselle d'Eon."

In connection with d'Eon there is a curious story told of Franklin during his residence as American envoy at Passy, now part of Paris but then a suburb. Franklin let it be known that he wished to contribute to the "blessed bread" being distributed in the parish of Passy. He offered thirteen *brioches*, or cakes, representing the thirteen American colonies, on the first of which — destined for the curé — should be inscribed, in large letters, the word "Liberty." The curé and the bishop sought to dissuade him, but it was d'Eon who caused him to renounce the project by saying: "Passy is too close to Versailles. They do not greatly care for that word there." [1]

It may have been that d'Eon, who at times manifested sportive inclinations, took it upon himself to carry the inscribed cakes to Versailles. If so, this would explain his reference to "the Liberty" in his letter to Franklin.

III

Franklin's association with the former High Priest of the Hell Fire Club led to his joining in one of the most curious enterprises in which he ever engaged. This was the revision of the English Prayer Book. Lord le Despencer did most of the work, but Franklin cut down the catechism and the reading and singing Psalms, and wrote the preface. As

[1] Archives of the Historical Society of Auteuil and Passy.

we have already seen, Franklin had an incurable fondness for criticizing and altering religious works. Of the catechism only two questions were retained: "What is your duty to God?" and "What is your duty to your neighbor?" Omitted were all reference to the sacraments, to the divinity of Jesus, the commandments in the catechism, the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and even the canticle, "All ye Works of the Lord." The Apostle's Creed was pared down "to the parts that are most intelligible and most essential." The *Te Deum* and *Venite* were abridged, and the services for communion, infant baptism, confirmation, visitation of the sick, marriage and burial of the dead were much shortened.

Franklin expressly approved Lord le Despencer's omissions of the Commination "and all cursing of mankind," and explained his own cuts in certain of the Psalms by saying that "they imprecate, in the most bitter terms, the vengeance of God in our adversaries, contrary to the spirit of Christianity, which commands us to love our enemies and to pray for those that hate us and despitefully use us."

The purpose of the book, as explained in the preface, was a humanitarian one — to prevent the old and faithful from freezing to death through long ceremonies in cold churches; to make the services so short as to attract the young and lively; and to relieve the well-disposed from the affliction of interminable prayers.

Theology fascinated Franklin, but it also troubled him. He could not forbear tinkering with it whenever he had the time. He sought to make it not only good, but humane. He strove to remodel it in his own kindly image. To see him, ancient enemy of New England ecclesiasticism, associated in this task with the former Abbot of the Hell Fire Club, might well have caused a smile on Olympus itself.

The book was issued by Wilkie, the bookseller in St.

Paul's Churchyard, in 1773, but, says Franklin, was "never much noticed." It was ahead of its time. In the eighteenth century, bigotry, though productive of convulsive reactions among the young, was still strong among the old, who had erected upon it institutions as precious as temples.

It is a curious fact that "Franklin's Prayer Book" was followed by his friend Thomas Jefferson's revision of the New Testament, better known as "Jefferson's Bible." This too, was a product of the reaction against reaction.

IV

The "Edict of the King of Prussia," which aroused the laughter of the gentlemen at Lord le Despencer's house, purported to be an announcement emanating from Frederick the Great. In solemn, burlesque style it cited the fact that Britain has been first settled by Saxon colonies, that it had been decided to raise a revenue from these colonies to defray the expenses of defense, and that certain measures had been ordered to be put into execution. These measures were the same which Britain had ordained for America. One command was this: "That all the thieves, highway and street robbers, housebreakers, forgerers, s-d-tes, and villains of every denomination, who have forfeited their lives to the law in Prussia, but whom we in our great clemency do not think fit here to hang, shall be emptied out of our gaols into the said Island of Great Britain, for the better peopling of that country."

Another of Franklin's newspaper contributions, which appeared about the same time, was called "Rules for Reducing a Great Empire to a Small One." It began with this statement: "A great empire, like a great cake, is most easily diminished at the edges," and then proceeded to recite, in satirical form, those acts of the British ministers and Parlia-

ment against which the American colonists had made most complaint.

Franklin was 63 years old before any of his collected writings were published in book form. In 1769 a volume called his "Works" appeared in London. It consisted chiefly of letters and papers on electrical and other scientific subjects. It was translated into French by his friend Dubourg in Paris.

Chapter XXV

The Attack in the Cockpit

I

MEANTIME ugly incidents have been occurring in America, particularly in Massachusetts, greatly to the annoyance of Governor Hutchinson. The seizure of John Hancock's sloop, the "Liberty," for a violation of the revenue laws, has caused a riot in Boston. British troops have occupied Faneuil Hall and the State House. A collision in King Street has caused three deaths and the trial of the officer commanding the British detachment, Captain Preston. At Providence the British revenue schooner, the "Gaspee," has been boarded and burned.

Franklin regards as particularly offensive the quartering of troops in Boston. He tells a Whig member of Parliament so. The member informs Franklin that all these forcible measures are due to the suggestions — the actual request, indeed — of prominent Americans themselves. He offers to back up his assertions with indisputable documents. He brings Franklin a packet of letters written by respectable New Englanders to William Whately, a former member of Parliament and a confidential agent for the Grenville ministry. The contents of these letters amaze Franklin. They call for a strong hand in dealing with the American populace. Six of them are by Thomas Hutchinson, written when he was chief justice and lieutenant-governor of Massachusetts. Hutchinson is not an Englishman but a native, a graduate of Harvard, and one of the earliest advocates of narrow and rigid Sabbath laws. In one letter

he asserts that "there must be an abridgment of what are called English liberties."

Four of the letters are by Andrew Oliver, Hutchinson's successor as lieutenant-governor. Oliver writes in the spirit of a wretched little sycophant. He recommends that the "officers of the crown be made, in some measure, independent of the people," and even suggests that the ruling power be vested in an Order of Patricians, composed exclusively of land owners.

Franklin obtained permission to send the letters to Boston, on condition that they be neither copied nor printed, and be afterwards returned to the lender. In 1772 he sent them to the Massachusetts Assembly, where they naturally created astonishment and fury. John Adams showed them everywhere, even to his aunt, of whom he wrote: "Aunt is let into the secret, and is full of her interjections." The Assembly indignantly demanded the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver, but nothing came of their petition.

In time, of course, the letters got into print and were published in England. A demand was set up to account for their falling into American hands. William Whately was dead and his brother, Thomas, was at once placed on the defensive. He explained that William's letters, by permission, had once been examined by John Temple, former lieutenant-governor of New Hampshire, but he failed to clear Temple of suspicion. This led to a duel between Temple and Whately in Hyde Park, the combatants being separated by Ralph Izard, of South Carolina, and Arthur Lee, of Virginia, of whom we are to hear more later.

About this time occurred the "Boston Tea Party," when fifty men, disguised as Mohawk Indians, boarded English vessels at night and emptied the tea cargoes belonging to the East India Company into Boston Harbor.

In December, 1773, Franklin issued through the Lon-

don *Public Advertiser* a statement saying that neither Whately nor Temple had anything to do with the arrival of the letters in America, but that he alone was responsible for sending them. He justified his action on the ground that they were not private letters, but related to public matters closely concerning the dispute between England and America.

Franklin, as the Massachusetts agent, is promptly summoned to appear before the Committee of Lords which is to consider the petition for the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver. Almost at the same time he is sued by Thomas Whately for the alleged profits made from the sale of his brother's letters. Franklin realizes that the English Tories, who have been long lying in wait for him, are about to hurl their attack. Knowing that he is to be questioned by Alexander Wedderburn, the king's solicitor, an ambitious Scotchman with an acid tongue, he engaged as his counsel the Liberal, John Dunning, afterwards Lord Ashburton, and musters his forces for the defense.

The hearing is held before the Privy Council in a room called the Cockpit. Both English and American notables are there. It is a case of standing room only. Even Franklin has to stand. He does so calmly, dressed in Manchester velvet, spotted, with a flowing wig on his head. During the whole blazing examination his tranquil countenance does not alter.

Wedderburn opens in his fiercest manner. He virtually accuses Franklin of stealing and misusing private letters. He contends that Franklin's purpose is to become governor of Massachusetts himself.

"I hope, my lord," he cries, "you will mark and brand the man for the honor of this country, of Europe, and of mankind."

Wedderburn finishes in a crescendo of invective and vio-

lent abuse, "laying on," wrote Edmund Burke, "beyond all bound and decency." Franklin, realizing that he has been summoned not for a hearing but a humiliation, declines to be questioned. The Committee of the Council throws out the Massachusetts petition, and a few days later Franklin is dismissed as deputy postmaster-general in America. Wedderburn becomes, in time, Lord Loughborough.

Wedderburn's abuse of Franklin releases a torrent of Tory ire against the impudent colonials of America. Dr. Samuel Johnson writes his pamphlet, "Taxation no Tyranny," calls Franklin "the master of mischief," and announces that he is "willing to love all mankind except an American." Press and politicians become bitter and scornful. Franklin realizes that his mission in behalf of peace and union has been a failure. He can hear the growls and curses of approaching war. He makes ready to return to that peaceful home on the Delaware from which he has been absent for ten years.

II

Meantime things have been happening there. Sally, now 23 years old, has become engaged to Richard Bache, a young merchant. Franklin receives the news without objection, but without enthusiasm. "At present," he writes Deborah, "I suppose you would agree with me that we cannot do more than fit her out handsomely in clothes and furniture, not exceeding in the whole five hundred pounds of value. For the rest, they must depend, as you and I did, on their own industry and care, as what remains in our hands will be barely sufficient for our support, and not enough for them when it comes to be divided at our decease."

Bache was not successful as a provider, and his father-in-law occasionally had to help him, but he and Sally became

the parents of very handsome children. One of these, Benjamin Franklin Bache, was the spoiled idol of his grandmother. She could write Franklin little else than a "history of his pretty actions." When this boy grew up, he became the bitter editor of the *Aurora*, the ardent partisan of Jefferson, and the insatiable critic of Washington.

The occasional letters which Franklin receives from son William back home are disturbing. William takes some pride in himself as the Royal Governor of New Jersey and in all cases of dispute between the crown and the colony, he inclines more and more toward the royal viewpoint. Franklin is pained, but refrains from criticism. "I only wish you," he writes William, "to act uprightly and steadily, avoiding that duplicity which, in Hutchinson, adds contempt to indignation. If you can promote the prosperity of your people, and leave them happier than you found them, whatever your political principles are, your memory will be honored."

III

It is probable that Franklin, now no longer a young man, would not have ridden out the pre-Revolutionary storm so well had he not been so well sheltered in the quiet home of Margaret and Polly Stevenson in Craven Street. "In all that time," he wrote Polly, "we never had among us the smallest misunderstanding; our friendship has been all clear sunshine, without the least cloud in its hemisphere."

It was for those who produced this unclouded atmosphere that Franklin wrote his light-hearted "Craven Street Gazette," a chronicle burlesquing the solemn events at court as devoutly reported in the newspapers. In this Mrs. Stevenson is called the Queen, Polly is the lady chamberlain, and another Sally Franklin, daughter of an English relative whom Franklin has brought down to live with him,

ce jeudi matin

101

Si envie extrême que j'ai toujours de passer quelques moments avec vous mon bon papa, m'a fait vous demander hier si vous seriez chez vous ce soir, mais ne vous dérangez nullement pour cela je crains fort qu'il ne me soit impossible d'aller vous voir, si je le puis je n'irai que tard ; j'avois pensé à une chose plus aisé à faire ce seroit qu'à votre retour de puis vous vinssiez demander le thé à mes bons voisins à qui cela feroit un grand endeau ; il me seroit plus aisé d'entre la avec vous, parceque'un retour de mon mari, je serois à l'instant chez moi ; adieu mon bon papa faites l'usage que vous voudrez de mon idée, mais croyez que toutes choses que personne au monde ne vous aime plus sincèrement que moi ;

PAGE OF A LETTER FROM MADAME BRILLON TO FRANKLIN, IN WHICH SHE CALLS HIM "MY GOOD PAPA."

From the collection of the American Philosophical Society.

is the first maid of honor. He himself is referred to as "the great person" or "Dr. Fatsides." The following are specimen passages:

Saturday, September 22, 1770.

This morning Queen Margaret, accompanied by her first maid of honor, Miss Franklin, set out for Rochester. Immediately on their departure, the whole street was in tears — from a heavy shower of rain. It is whispered, that the new family administration, which took place on her Majesty's departure, promises, like all other new administrations, to govern much better than the old one.

We hear that the great person (so called from his enormous size), of a certain family in a certain street is grievously affected at the late changes, and could hardly be comforted this morning, though the new ministry promised him a roasted shoulder of mutton and potatoes for his dinner.

. . . . . .

We hear that the lady chamberlain of the household went to market this morning by her own self, gave the butcher whatever he asked for the mutton, and had no dispute with the potato-woman, to their great amazement at the change of times.

Sunday, September 23.

It is now found by sad experience, that good resolutions are easier made than executed. Notwithstanding yesterday's solemn order of Council, nobody went to Church today. It seems the great person's broad-built bulk lay so long abed that the breakfast was not over till it was too late to dress.

. . . . . .

Dr. Fatsides made four hundred and sixty-nine turns to his dining-room, as the exact distance of a visit to the lovely

Lady Barwell, whom he did not find at home; so there was no struggle for and against a kiss, and he sat down to dream in the easy-chair, that he had it without any trouble.

. . . . . .

Monday, September 24.

This evening there was high play at Craven Street House. The great person lost money. It is supposed the ministers, as is usually supposed of all ministers, shared the emoluments among them.

. . . . . .

Tuesday, September 25.

At six o'clock this afternoon, news came by post, that her Majesty arrived safely at Rochester on Saturday night. The bells immediately rang — for candles to illuminate the parlor; the court went into cribbage; and the evening concluded with every demonstration of joy.

IV

During the long lulls of waiting on the movements of ministries and Parliaments, Franklin frequently found solace in his ancient love — scientific investigation and experiment. He invented a reformed alphabet with phonetic spelling; he improved a stove in the Craven Street house so that it would burn its own smoke; he recommended a scheme for the better ventilation of the Houses of Parliament; he studied colds and traced them to impure air and overfeeding; he subscribed to a project for conveying "civilized" animals and seeds to the islands of the Pacific; he wrote on rainfalls, swimming, and the Gulf Stream; he was interested in the Northwest Passage and the Aurora Borealis; he discovered that it was easier to draw a boat through deep water than through shallow; he advised upon the equip-

ment of St. Paul's Cathedral, the government powder magazines, and Buckingham Palace with lightning rods; he went on walks carrying a cane containing oil to study the effects of oil on water; he advised with Adam Smith while Smith was writing "The Wealth of Nations"; he watched three flies come to life in the sun after being drowned for many months in a bottle of Madeira sent from Virginia, and wrote:

"I wish it were possible, from this instance, to invent a method of embalming drowned persons in such a manner that they may be recalled to life at any period however distant; for having a very ardent desire to see and observe the state of America a hundred years hence, I should prefer to any ordinary death the being immersed in a cask of Madeira wine, with a few friends, till that time, to be recalled to life by the solar warmth of my dear country!"

All the time he was making friends among the great and meeting eminent personages. He often attended the heavy dinners of the period and followed its customs in sometimes coming home with a thickened head. The days of Poor Richard and his pawky maxims were far, far behind. He was once invited to dine with Christian VII, king of Denmark, who was in London on a visit to his brother-in-law, George III. He attended the salon of Mrs. Montagu, and the meetings of numerous clubs and societies. He consorted often with clergymen and physicians. The latter had a club of which his friend, Sir John Pringle, was president. Thomas Jefferson thus quotes a story about this club which Franklin told him one day when they were seated together listening to some wearisome discussion in early congressional days:

"I happened to be there when the question to be considered was whether physicians had, on the whole, done most good or harm. The young members, particularly, having

discussed it very learnedly and eloquently till the subject was exhausted, one of them observed to Sir John Pringle, that although it was not usual for the President to take part in a debate, yet they were desirous to know his opinion on the question. He said they must first tell him whether, under the application of physicians they meant to include *old women;* if they did, he thought they had done more good than harm; otherwise, more harm than good."

English clergymen were charmed by Franklin's geniality, learning, and occasional jokes at their expense no less than physicians. Among men of the cloth with whom he founded solid friendships were such conspicuous figures as Dr. Richard Price, Dr. Joseph Priestley, and Jonathan Shipley, the good bishop of St. Asaph. At the bishop's country home at Twyford, Hampshire, Franklin spent many tranquil weeks. It was here that he began his oft-interrupted "Autobiography" and gained for himself the worshipful admiration of the bishop's daughters. To one of them, Georgiana, he had presented "Mungo," an American gray squirrel. On its meeting with sudden death, he wrote for its tomb one of the epitaphs which he was fond of composing in the style he liked to call "monumental."

V

One day the easy routine of life at the Craven Street house was broken by a momentous announcement. Polly Stevenson wrote him from Margate, at the seaside, that she had met a handsome and insinuating young physician. She confessed that he had made an impression on her. To the Doctor this news must have been a little saddening, for Polly was the best beloved of all of "Franklin's girls"; but he bravely mustered all the gayety with which he was accustomed to write to Polly and replied:

"There are certain circumstances in Life wherein 'tis perhaps best not to hearken to Reason. For instance, possibly if the Truth were known, I have Reason to be jealous of this same insinuating, handsome young Physician; but as it flatters more my Vanity, and therefore gives me the more pleasure, to suppose you were in Spirits on account of my safe return, I shall turn a deaf Ear to Reason in this case, as I have done with Success in twenty others."

Polly duly married her young doctor and became Mrs. William Hewson. Her devotion to the old doctor, however, remained steady, striking proofs of which we shall see at a later date. Franklin made friends easily; but he also had a rarer quality which held them constant through long silences and wide spaces of years.

Polly had become a mother and Franklin had returned to Philadelphia when one day she wrote him:

"My mother was urging me to-day to wean my little girl. I cannot tell why, for I never was in better health; I pleaded for her by saying that as she is to be your granddaughter you would be very angry if I did not let her suck a year. My mother then was silent, for absent as well as present, your opinion is her Law."

A mighty presence, this, that could make its influence felt across 3000 miles of water and determine the question of weaning a child as well as the shape of the lightning rods on Buckingham Palace.

Chapter XXVI

The Defeat of Pitt and Peace

I

IN the course of years Franklin has learned that the thing which is impossible to the go-getter, frequently comes round of its own motion to him who waits. On his previous visit to London, he had tried unsuccessfully to see the Great Commoner, William Pitt. He must therefore have smiled one of his shrewdest smiles when one morning in August, 1774, fourteen years later, he hears a knock at the door and learns that the great man is outside and craves an interview with him.

Pitt is now the august Lord Chatham; his powers are waning as his gout increases; but his is still a weighty influence throughout the land. He invites Franklin to come home with him in his carriage. He civilly questions Franklin upon the state of affairs in America. Is it true that the colonies there aim to set themselves up as an independent state, and that they particularly intend to get rid of the Navigation Acts? Franklin reassures him. He declares he has never heard the least wish for a separation; and as to the Navigation Acts, he is sure that the colonies are perfectly willing to accept the provision requiring that trade be carried on in British or plantation bottoms, that foreign ships be excluded from American ports, and that the crews be at least three-fourths British. His lordship expresses his gratification and adds that he hopes he will see Franklin again.

On September 4, the Continental Congress meets at Philadelphia. It passes measures of alternating defiance of and devotion to the British crown. It encourages Massachusetts in its resistance to arbitrary power, and calls for the complete cessation of imports from or exports to Great Britain. It passes the carefully prepared Declaration of Rights. On the other hand, it votes rather pathetic addresses to the people of Great Britain, of Canada, and America, and sends a petition to George III, calling him "the loving father of your whole people," and closing as follows:

"We therefore most earnestly beseech your Majesty, that your royal authority and interposition may be used for our relief, and that a gracious answer may be given to this petition. That your Majesty may enjoy every felicity through a long and glorious reign over loyal and happy subjects, and that your descendants may inherit your prosperity and dominions till time shall be no more, is, and always will be our sincere and fervent prayer."

Franklin sends a copy to Lord Dartmouth, the colonial secretary, and then drives out to Kent to lay a copy before Lord Chatham, who receives him "with an affectionate kind of respect." He tells Franklin that he deems the Continental Congress to be "the most honorable assembly of statesmen since those of the ancient Greeks and Romans in the most virtuous times," and that he means to address the House of Lords on the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of General Gage's troops from Boston. He invites Franklin to attend.

On the appointed day at the Lords, Franklin meets Lord Chatham, who takes him by the arm and is about to show him through a door, when they bump full into the stony face of an established British Precedent. This door, the rigid keeper informs them, can be entered by none but the

eldest sons or brothers of peers. Even the mighty Chatham retreats in awe, and Franklin has to be taken back by his limping lordship to an obscure door near the bar.

Chatham makes one of his mightiest efforts. He declares that the very basis of British liberty is that no subject shall be taxed but by his own consent. He demands justice for the Americans. "Let the sacredness of their property remain inviolate, let it be taxable only by their own consent, or it ceases to be property." But "all availed," wrote Franklin, "no more than the whistling of the winds." The lords and bishops signify that they not only do not mean to withdraw the troops from Boston, but that they are thinking of sending more.

II

Chatham's defeat darkens the cloud of unpopularity hanging over Franklin in London. He is no longer invited to great houses. The press abuses him. In Parliament he is called a mischievous enemy. There are rumors that he is to be arrested for treason and in one of his letters he refers to the possibility of his reposing in Tyburn. Even in his own country he is suspected of deceit and double-dealing. Josiah Quincy is sent over from Massachusetts to take soundings, and Arthur Lee, who is to succeed Franklin as the Massachusetts agent, sends home letters full of the criticisms and innuendos that could emanate only from an imagination made turgid by a sense of superiority having no proper outlet.

The ministry's next move in the attempt either to win Franklin over or to circumvent him is to employ feminine wiles. He receives an invitation to play chess with Mrs. Howe, sister of Admiral Lord Howe. He complies, enjoys himself, and is asked to come again. Negotiations ensue, participated in by David Barclay, the Quaker leader,

and Franklin's old friend, Dr. Fothergill. For discussion Franklin prepares certain "Hints," which call for the repeal of the tea duty, the granting of a large measure of autonomy to the colonies, and among other things, the right of unrestricted manufacturing. Several meetings and discussions with notabilities take place, but all come to naught. Franklin even offers to stand as security for the payment of damages inflicted by the Boston Tea Party, to the extent of £15,000, but Lord North's ministry will concede no jot. Finally a scarcely concealed bribe is offered to Franklin. He is told that if he can bring about a reconciliation with the colonies on terms suitable to the dignity of the government, he may reap a reward "beyond his expectation."

Barclay and Fothergill give up. They admit that no peace is possible except on corrupt terms. Waiting an extra year has availed nothing, and once more Franklin prepares to sail.

Before the year is out, he hears that Deborah is dead, full of years, and Sally reigns in her stead in the new house on Market Street. He sails for home March 21, 1775. On the way his ship passes another bearing a letter from a young Englishman, much battered by fortune, whom he has recommended to friends in America as an "ingenious, worthy young man." The letter is written from opposite the London Coffee House, Front Street, Philadelphia. It says:

"Your countenancing me has obtained me many friends and much reputation, for which please to accept my sincere thanks."

It is signed "Thos. Pain," without the final "e."

Chapter XXVII

Assistant at the Birth of a Republic

I

IT was a heavy-hearted Franklin who turned his face away from England, where he had spent ten and a half years of continuous labor, towards a Deborahless home in disturbed America. Dr. Priestley, the discoverer of oxygen and the historian of electricity, with whom he spent his final hours in London, says that the Doctor's last act was to read over some American papers from which he desired extracts to be sent to the English press, "and in reading them, he was frequently not able to proceed for the tears literally running down his cheeks."

But on the six weeks' voyage home, accompanied by William Temple Franklin, Franklin is soon happily engaged in probing the ocean. His chief comforter is the Gulf Stream. He keeps it under constant observation, sounds it and repeatedly takes its temperature, finds that it is warmer than the surrounding ocean, and concludes that it has its source in the tropics and receives its impulse from the trade winds. He also discovers that its waters are not phosphorescent. He likewise watches the navigation of the ship and concludes that it would do better if its hull were shaped so as to offer the least resistance to the water and if its rigging were so changed as to make the least resistance to the wind. He writes a piece about it, illustrated with drawings.

When he lands in Philadelphia, he learns with concern but no surprise that the embattled patriots of Concord and

Lexington have fired shots which are calling the entire thirteen colonies to arms. The next day an ode appears in the local paper dedicated "To the Friend of his Country and Mankind, Doctor Benjamin Franklin, on his Return from England, May 6th, 1775." It begins:

"Welcome! Once more
To these fair western plains — thy native shore.
Here live beloved, and leave the tools at home
To run their length, and finish out their doom.
Here lend thine aid to quench their brutal fires,
Or fan the flame which Liberty inspires,
Or fix the grand conductor, that shall guide
The tempest back, and 'lectrify their pride.
Rewarding Heaven will bless thy cares at last,
And future glories glorify the past."

He finds there is a new hotel in town; it is called the "Franklin Inn." It is the first of a long line of things bearing the name of Franklin, including hotels, clubs, societies, inventions, institutes, colleges, cities, counties, and cigars. Even Tennessee tries very hard to have herself called the State of Franklin.

He instantly becomes the complete patriot, writing to Edmund Burke: "Gen. Gage's troops made a most vigorous retreat — twenty miles in three hours — scarce to be paralleled in history; the feeble Americans, who pelted them all the way, could scarce keep up with them"; but he still has a notion that he may be asked to return to England. Upon hearing this, Jane Mecom writes:

"You positively must not go; you have served the public in that way beyond what any other man can boast till you are now come to a good old age, and some younger men must now take that painful service upon them. Don't go, pray don't go. . . ."

II

On the day after his arrival Franklin is chosen to be one of Pennsylvania's three delegates to the Continental Congress, which organizes for war, with George Washington as commander-in-chief of the army. One of its first acts is to elect Franklin postmaster-general. He signalizes the event by thriftily appointing his none too prosperous son-in-law, Richard Bache, his deputy; and by changing the frank on letters from "Free — B. Franklin" to "B free Franklin," thereby setting up a precedent for making propaganda out of postmarks which other governments have been happy to follow. Being appointed on the committee charged with the production of a new Continental currency, he also thriftily procures the work of printing and engraving for Sally's husband.

Congress places him on numerous other committees: To find supplies of saltpeter; to negotiate with the Indians; to consider a conciliatory offer from Lord North; and to regulate and protect colonial commerce.

His belief that he might soon return to London was set aside when news came of the burning by the British of coast towns, and of the losses at Bunker Hill. He sat down and wrote a blunt and indignant letter breaking off relations with William Strahan, one of the oldest and most faithful of his London friends. But on cooling off, he never actually sent it, and after doing much propaganda duty, it now reposes in the files of the State Department at Washington.

In the same month — July, 1775 — he brings before Congress his Plan of Union, proposing that each colony retain its independence in internal affairs, that a Congress annually elected shall regulate external relations, and that supreme authority shall be vested in a council of twelve.

All the British colonies bordering on the Atlantic are to be invited to join, including Ireland. The Plan was referred to a committee, where it died of inattention and under-nourishment. Even at that date, a filial Congress did not wish to affront the mother country by flourishing the sundering knife, and the Episcopal clergy went right on praying for the king. These prayers gave offense to some of the hot-heads, who proposed that they be stopped. But Franklin raised a warning hand.

"The measure," he said, "is quite unnecessary; for the Episcopal clergy, to my certain knowledge, have been constantly praying, these twenty years, that '*God would give to the king and his council wisdom*'; and we all know that not the least notice has been taken of that prayer. So it is plain, the gentlemen have no interest in the court of Heaven."

During the first few weeks of Congress, Franklin was absent from many sessions, due to attacks of gout. Strange ailment for the author of Poor Richard's frugal maxims! But he did much work for the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, of which he was elected chairman, in organizing measures of defense, particularly in inventing ingenious chevaux-de-frise to block the river Delaware against the British fleet. In the autumn of 1775 he was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly, but resigned when he was appointed a member of a committee of three to go to Cambridge, Mass., and help the despairing Gen. Washington work out a plan for raising and maintaining an army to replace the disorderly mob which had first been inflicted upon him.

III

When the year 1776 opens, there is still much confusion. The wealthier classes in America cannot bring themselves to

hurl away their allegiance to the throne of England, whose ritual, traditions, and viewpoint they regard as well-nigh divine, and in Pennsylvania the reactionary following of the Proprietaries produce sordid dissensions. It is realized that a propaganda pamphlet is needed for general circulation, something ringing, something bold and dramatic. Franklin is too busy to do it. He writes to Mrs. Stevenson in London: "I am well, and as happy as I can be under the Fatigue of more Business than is suitable to my Age and Inclination. But it follows me everywhere, and I submit."

Where there is a demand, however, there is always a supply, and the supplier proves to be the young Englishman who but recently has come over with an introduction from Franklin — Thomas Paine. His pamphlet appears on January 10, 1776, published by Robert Bell in Philadelphia, price two shillings. It is entitled "Common Sense," and reaches a climax in these sentences:

"Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of Nature cries, IT IS TIME TO PART."

When soon afterwards Paine goes on a visit to New York, he carries with him this letter of introduction from Franklin to Gen. Charles Lee:

"The bearer, Mr. Paine, has requested a line of introduction to you. . . . He is the reputed, and I think the real, author of Common Sense, a pamphlet that has made a great impression here."

IV

About this time a mysterious stranger, having a military bearing, arrives in Philadelphia and after several efforts gets a message through to Congress. A committee composed of John Jay, Thomas Jefferson, and Franklin hears

him in Carpenters' Hall. The stranger reveals that he speaks in the name of the King of France, who is ready to aid the Americans with arms and money. A long delay occurs before Congress is able to make up its mind to follow up the hint. It finally appoints a committee to act as a kind of secret department of foreign relations and "to correspond secretly with friends in Great Britain, Ireland, and other parts of the world." On it are John Jay, John Dickinson, Thomas Johnson, Benjamin Harrison and Franklin. On Franklin, with his trained abilities and long experience abroad, the bulk of the secret committee's work naturally falls. One of his first acts is to send a "feel-out" letter to his old friend in Paris, M. Dubourg. Arthur Lee is asked to sound the foreign embassies in London, and preparations are made to send Silas Deane, of Connecticut, direct to France to act as a commission merchant and confidential agent.

Then comes the news of the dismal collapse of the expedition to Canada, with Gen. Montgomery dead on the heights of Quebec and Gen. Benedict Arnold severely wounded. Congress, having by now learned the committee habit, appoints one to go to Canada and win it for the Union. The members are Samuel Chase, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and — of course — Franklin. Carroll's brother John, a Catholic priest, is taken along as French interpreter and propagandist.

The committee boards a sloop at New York and sets sail up the Hudson for Albany. The perils of the deep assail the little sloop, and its tired crew sight West Point only after three days. Two more days are required to reach Albany. There follows a jolting ride in a country wagon over the 32 miles to Saratoga. Franklin, now 70 years old and more suited to carpet slippers in a warm study than a wild-goose expedition to Canada in the frozen winter, dis-

mounts at the home of Gen. Schuyler in an enfeebled and dispirited condition. He believes he will not survive. He even sits down to write to a few friends "by way of farewell." But the Schuyler home has its warming attractions, including, so Carroll notes, "two daughters (Betsey and Peggy), lively, agreeable, black-eyed gals"; and a week's rest in such company restores the frozen commissioners. They push onward by boat through the ice of Lake George and at last reach Montreal, all of them worn out. There they encounter the bitterest experience of all: they learn that lack of money, American bad manners, and resolute Tory opposition make the very notion of winning Canada hopeless. Franklin, feeling the pangs of age, cold, and gout, has had enough. He turns back to report to Congress.

The year is 1776. Comes June, nowhere more flaming than in the demurely walled gardens of Philadelphia. Franklin, looking out on the soaring roses of the month's 21st day, writes this letter to Gen. Washington:

"I am just recovering from a severe fit of the Gout, which has kept me from Congress and Company ever since you left us, so that I know little of what has pass'd there, except that a Declaration of Independence is preparing."

V

A committee of five had been elected to draft that document: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Robert R. Livingston, Roger Sherman, and — inevitably — Franklin. He cheerfully agreed with his colleagues in leaving the actual work of writing to Jefferson. His gout made an excellent excuse.

"I have made it a rule," he told Jefferson later, "whenever in my power to avoid becoming the draftsman of papers to be reviewed by a public body."

THE COUNTESS D' HOUDETOT.

ONE OF THE FRENCHWOMEN WHO HAD AN ALMOST EXTRAVAGANT ADMIRATION FOR FRANKLIN.

From the Ford Collection in the New York Public Library.

He then related his famous anecdote of John Thompson, the hatter:

"When I was a journeyman printer, one of my companions, an apprenticed hatter, having served out his time, was about to open shop for himself. His first concern was to have a handsome signboard, with a proper inscription. He composed it in these words, *John Thompson, Hatter, makes and sells Hats for ready Money,* with a figure of a hat subjoined. But he thought he would submit it to his friends for their amendments. The first he showed it to thought the word *hatter* tautologous, because followed by the words *makes hats,* which showed he was a hatter. It was struck out. The next observed that the word *makes* might as well be omitted, because his customers would not care who made the hats; if good and to their mind they would buy, by whomsoever made. He struck it out. A third said he thought the words *for ready money* were useless, as it was not the custom of the place to sell on credit. Everyone who purchased expected to pay. They were parted with; and the inscription now stood, *John Thompson sells hats.* '*Sells* hats? says his next friend; why, nobody will expect you to give them away. What, then, is the use of that word?' It was stricken out, and *hats* followed, the rather as there was one painted on the board. So his inscription was reduced ultimately to *John Thompson,* with the figure of a hat subjoined."

When signing time came, there was some objection on the part of Southerners to the wording of Jefferson's document, particularly from fiery ones, owing to Jefferson's attack on George III for repeatedly preventing the repeal of the slave-importation law, whereupon John Hancock cried: "We must all hang together," thus giving Franklin his chance to make the celebrated observation:

"We must, indeed, all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately."

Robert Morris and John Dickinson failed to appear to make Pennsylvania's vote unanimous, so Franklin cast it alone for the proudest document in American history — still proud, though so unfamiliar to the country's patriotic citizenry that during the World War persons were arrested in Pennsylvania for distributing legible copies of it.

And then Franklin signed his name, adding that scroll-like flourish beneath which is well-nigh an autobiographical hieroglyph, betokening abundant vitality and a secret love for the fantastic.

VI

In the same month Franklin is elected to Congress, which at once embroils itself in a fierce debate over the question of voting by states. He fights in vain against the expedient of giving one vote to each state, regardless of size. He next goes to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention and is promptly elected president. It closes by voting him unanimous thanks for his able advice; but Franklin has no opportunity to take pride therein, for on its heels comes the news that his son and pride, William Franklin, has been removed from his post as Royal Governor of New Jersey and taken to Connecticut under arrest as "a mischievous and dangerous enemy." William remains an obdurate royalist for the duration of the war, and afterwards goes to England to enjoy a life pension of £800 a year voted him by an appreciative government.[1]

"Nothing," wrote Franklin, "had ever affected him with such keen sensations as to find himself deserted in his

[1] Elizabeth Franklin, wife of William, died of "accumulated distresses" before he was released and was buried within the chancel of St. Paul's Church, New York.

old age by his only son; and not only deserted, but to find him taking up arms against him in a cause wherein his good fame, fortune, and life were all at stake."

VII

While Washington is wondering how he is going to defend New York with his rag-tag army of 9000 men, Admiral Howe, Franklin's recent friend at the London chess table, lands on Staten Island an army of trained troops which his brother, Gen. Howe, is to command. The admiral at once sends a conciliatory letter to Franklin, together with books, parcels, and letters forwarded in his care by Franklin's still faithful English friends. A correspondence ensues during which the colonial forces lose the battle of Long Island. Finally Congress names a committee to meet the admiral. Its members are Edward Rutledge, John Adams, and — once more — Franklin. Lord Howe receives this committee in a specially built bower on Staten Island while his Grenadier Guards present arms, and spreads before them a collation including claret, ham, tongue and mutton. But nothing comes of the conference. The American commissioners insist that their country will discuss terms only as an independent power, while he admits that he is not empowered to make a definite proposal. The war goes on, the year ending gloomily for American arms. Washington is driven off Manhattan Island, evacuating Forts Washington and Lee, losing the battle of White Plains, and retreating through New Jersey. Congress in alarm quits Philadelphia for Baltimore, and Thomas Paine in "The American Crisis" writes: "These are the times that try men's souls." Only one success comes to relieve the dismal prospect: on Christmas day, 1776, Washington surprises and routs the Hessians at Trenton.

But Franklin is meantime mightily cheered by a long letter from his friend Barbue Dubourg at Paris. It begins by calling him "My Dear Master," assures him of Dubourg's interest and coöperation, and closes thus: "Adieu, fare you well, be prosperous, you and yours, and know that not one in the world is more devoted to you." Also word comes from Arthur Lee that at the court of the young Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette in France, a powerful figure has arisen to champion the American cause. This is Beaumarchais, playwright, musician, courtier, watchmaker and man of business. Only the year before a Paris theatre has produced his "Barber of Seville," with music by Rossini.

Congress, vastly elated, decides to dispatch a commission of three to France. Franklin is unanimously elected on the first ballot. The other members are Thomas Jefferson, now 33 years old, and Silas Deane. Jefferson excuses himself owing to the illness of his wife, and the meticulous Arthur Lee is elected in his stead. Franklin breathes a little sigh. Will he never get back to his beloved electrical devices, his library, his writing desk, his armonica, and the soothing ministrations of Sally? He rises and shakes himself, but does not think of declining.

"I am old and good for nothing," he remarks to Dr. Rush, "but, as the storekeepers say of their remnants of cloth, 'I am but a fag end, and you may have me for what you please.'"

In profound secrecy he leaves Philadelphia, with his two grandsons, William Temple Franklin and Benjamin Franklin Bache, on October 26th, 1777, and the next day boards the sloop Reprisal at Marcus Hook. But the British spy service watches every move. They know why he is going to France, but take it as a sign of the early collapse of the American rebellion.

The voyage is rough, but Franklin mitigates its horrors by a new study of ocean temperatures. He arrives at

Nantes, however, so weak that he can scarcely stand. The ladies of Nantes take one look at his peaked fur cap and rush back home to dress their hair *à la Franklin.* It augurs the success of this his last and greatest effort, begun at the age of 71. He has been midwife at the birth of the world's first great republic. He now goes to ensure its supply of certified milk.

Chapter XXVIII

A Fur Cap among Powdered Heads

I

SOON after establishing his residence in France, Franklin wrote two characteristic letters to feminine friends. One, to Mary Hewson in London, said:

"My Dear, Dear Polly, figure to yourself an old man, with grey hair appearing under a Martin fur cap, among the powder'd heads of Europe."

It is this fur cap which is pictured in the Franklin portrait by Cochin, reproduced as the frontispiece to this volume.

The other was to Elizabeth Partridge in Boston:

"Somebody, it seems, gave it out that I loved Ladies, and then everybody presented me their Ladies (or the ladies presented themselves) to be embrac'd, that is, to have their Necks kiss'd. For as to kissing of Lips and Cheeks, it is not the Mode here, the first is reconed rude, and the other may rub off the Paint. The French Ladies have, however, 1000 other ways of rendering themselves agreeable; by their various Attentions & Civilities, & their sensible Conversation."

Franklin was too much of a showman and had, besides, too much shrewdness and knowledge of the world, not to realize at a very early date that in France the ground had already been laid, the atmosphere already created, the settings already moved into their place, for the success of the appeals which he was about to make. He saw that all he had to do was to go slowly, to feel his way gradually, and not to make offensive mistakes.

And with it all he perceived that he was going to have the time of his life. This was the kind of *milieu* for which all his life he had craved and one for which he had unconsciously been preparing all his toilsome years in business, politics, science, and diplomacy. Here was Paris at the zenith of its exhilaration at getting rid of Louis XV and acquiring as its new monarchs the amiable Louis XVI and the charming if irresponsible Marie Antoinette. It was a Paris ready to hope and adore. It was especially in the mood to adore Franklin, and Franklin sagaciously decided to put nothing in its way. He swept his memory clean of all the shrivelling maxims of Poor Richard and gathering up the thirteen Virtues of his quondam creed — including Temperance, Silence, Order, Frugality and Moderation — he dropped them through a hole in his mind and closed the lid upon them with a barely muffled thud.

"In the midst of the effeminate and servile refinement of the 18th century," says the Count Sigur in his Memoirs, "the almost rustic apparel, the plain but firm demeanor, the free and direct language of the (American) envoys, seemed to have introduced within our walls . . . some sages contemporary with Plato, or republicans of the age of Cato and Fabius."

But the Count perhaps permitted his emotions to get out of hand. The American envoys were not quite so rustic and simple as all that. The lapse of a few months found Franklin, at any rate, installed in a comfortable villa at Passy, two miles from the centre of Paris, where he kept a carriage and a cellar full of the best wines, and whence he was soon dining out six nights a week, chiefly in the company of those ladies who had learned a thousand and one methods of rendering themselves agreeable.

As for the other envoys, they did not stint themselves, as their accounts soon showed.

II

The secret and unexpected landing of Franklin is still keeping France abuzz when a few days later he, Lee and Deane have their first interview with the Count de Vergennes, the French foreign minister. The Count is sympathetic but cautious. There are many difficulties in the way. The British ambassador, Lord Stormont, is making a fuss about the shipments of ammunition to America through the mercantile house of Roderique Hortalez & Co., which is simply another name for Beaumarchais. Treaties must be considered. France has been drained by recent wars with England. One must go slow. Meantime if Congress desires a loan of two million livres, payable after the war without interest, that can be arranged; only there must not be a word . . . not a word.

About the time of the payment of the second installment of this loan the twenty-year old Marquis de Lafayette, excited by the rapturous reception given to Franklin and athirst for adventure, sails for America, where Gen. Washington awaits him with an indulgent smile.

"He is exceedingly beloved," writes Franklin to the Secret Committee, "and everybody's good wishes attend him. . . . He has left a beautiful young wife, and for her sake particularly, we hope that his bravery and ardent desire to distinguish himself will be a little restrained by the General's prudence, so as not to permit his being hazarded much, but on some important occasion."

Lafayette's romantic deed sets up an instant fashion. All the young bloods of France and no end of out-of-work officers demand passage to America and a commission in the Continental army, it being usually specified that their rank must be one degree higher than that enjoyed at home.

"You can have no conception," writes Franklin to Dubourg, "how I am harassed. All my friends are sought out and teazed to teaze me. Great officers of all ranks, in all departments, ladies, great and small, besides professed solicitors, worry me from morning till night. The noise of every coach now that enters my court terrifies me. I am afraid to accept an invitation to dine abroad, being almost sure of meeting with some officer or officer's friend, who, as soon as I am put in good humor by a glass or two of champagne, begins his attack upon me."

Worse than men the infant republic needed money. The first French loan was a mere drop in a yawning bucket; what the American commissioners set their hearts on was ten millions of dollars, but as regards an increased loan the French remained coy if not silent. Evil news was coming through about Washington's retreat through New Jersey and the woeful winter at Valley Forge. When questioned about these events, Franklin is said to have remarked: "Ça ira, Ça ira," which freely translated means: "It will work out all right." Whether it was Franklin who thus created the slogan which a few years later was so often sounded in the French Revolution is not certainly known, but since every sententious phrase that he uttered was quickly repeated throughout France, it may have been he.

To create a favorable atmosphere for a new loan and to spread some useful propaganda, Franklin now takes his well-trained pen in hand and prepares a pamphlet containing the American state constitutions, which is translated by Dubourg. He also writes "A Comparison of Great Britain and America as to Credit in 1777"; "A Catechism relative to the English National Debt"; and "A Dialogue between Britain, France, Holland, Saxony, and America." By day he works incessantly and laboriously, keeping William Temple Franklin busy copying his many dispatches to Con-

gress and his evermounting correspondence with individuals; at night he recuperates by dining out.

From the records and documents he left behind, we can reconstruct a picture of him opening one day's letters as follows:

From Dr. Ingen Housz, physician to the Empress of Austria, asking Franklin to put him right regarding certain scientific experiments.

From a French chevalier who begs a few louis to avert impending starvation.

From a fellow countryman stranded at Marseilles.

From a poet asking for financial assistance in publishing an epic poem directed against the English.

From an anonymous correspondent who points out how wrong Franklin is in certain theories pertaining to lightning.

From a group of sailors on the U.S.S. Ranger complaining about the treatment received from Capt. John Paul Jones.

From Capt. Jones complaining about the behavior of the sailors.

From Arthur Lee declaring that he, Lee, is being ignored and insulted by French officials, and that he does not propose to stand for it.

From a lady asking him to locate her son believed to be somewhere in America.

From Jean Baptiste Le Roy asking for Ingen Housz's observations on Dr. Priestley's discovery relative to carbon.

From Madame Le Roy, who reminds him that she is " la petite femme de poche " — the little pocket Venus — and that he has been neglecting her shamefully, though she has loved him more than any of his other adopted daughters.

From the prior of a Benedictine abbey who has lost money gambling and begs Franklin to help him save his reputation. This letter bears a note appended by Franklin: " Wants me

to pay his gaming debts and he will pray for success to our cause."

It is little wonder that after a day of such matters, Franklin fled from the house and sought refuge in genial company. Also it seems that he sometimes breakfasted as well as dined with fair guests, for it is on record that the Marquise de Crequi told horrified friends that Franklin ate his eggs cracked into a goblet and cut his melon with a knife.

III

In reality Franklin at first enjoys no greater powers than those bestowed by Congress on the other two commissioners, but his greater age and far greater prestige lead the French to regard him as the chief envoy and he was soon being treated as if he were the head of the commission. Silas Deane does not mind, but the honors and attentions lavished upon Franklin fill the egotistic Arthur Lee with a poisonous jealousy. Describing the respect shown to Franklin by the Parisians on public occasions, Deane writes home: "I confess I felt a joy and pride which was pure and honest, though not disinterested, for I considered it an honor to be known to be an American and his acquaintance"; but Lee writes to his brother: "Things are going on worse and worse every day among ourselves, and my situation is more painful. I see in every department neglect, dissipation, and private schemes." Lee even goes to the length of proposing that Franklin be sent to Vienna, and Deane to Holland, while he should be left in sole charge at Paris. He makes repeated half-veiled charges against Franklin, and soon brings on open quarrels with Deane and Beaumarchais.

The situation as regards the ten or dozen American agents in France has been made worse by the failure of Congress to define their precise duties and jurisdiction. On Sunday

they all meet and dine at Franklin's home in Passy amicably enough, but during the rest of the time concealed intrigue makes the atmosphere sultry and dangerous. At this stage not even Franklin himself seems to have been made fully aware of the transactions that have taken place between Deane and Beaumarchais, with the connivance of the French government.

When the romantic Beaumarchais first proposed to the king that the Americans be supported as a means of weakening Britain, it was thought that France's assistance should be given directly, but this notion was abandoned in favor of a more crafty scheme which would hoodwink the English ambassador. Accordingly Beaumarchais got from the French treasury a million francs to set up a commercial firm which would sell war supplies to America on long terms. He was also to have the privilege of taking arms and powder from the royal arsenal and paying for them or replacing them at his convenience. Beaumarchais, then much in love with things Spanish, called this firm Roderique Hortalez & Co., and immediately began making secret shipments to America much in the spirit of a story-fed schoolboy. His great privileges are supposed to have come to him through the favor of Queen Marie Antoinette.

Beaumarchais intended to recoup himself through American shipments of tobacco, indigo, and rice, which his government was to help him dispose of. His capital was strengthened by the grant of a second million francs from Spain, and all would have gone well except that the expected cargoes from America failed to come through. This was due partly to congressional carelessness, partly to the vigilance of British cruisers, and partly to the malefactions of Arthur Lee, who led Congress to believe that the French shipments were sent as a gift.

It was arranged that the French government was to help

get Beaumarchais's ships safely out of port. Then if Lord Stormont, the English ambassador, discovered their purpose, it was to appear to be surprised and mortified, and stop the ships. When the ships were brought back to port and ostentatiously unloaded, Beaumarchais was to reload them elsewhere, or pretend to sell the ships and change their names before a new voyage was attempted. All this was to prevent an open breach with the British government, which still held the French port of Dunkirk; and though Lord Stormont often made a disturbance, this curious huggermuggery was actually carried on for two years, through an understanding between Deane and Beaumarchais reached before Franklin's arrival.

Beaumarchais seems to have hypnotized Deane. The American found it impossible to resist the Frenchman's powerful and reckless personality. He even permitted Beaumarchais to foist upon him the comic but ill-fated General du Coudray, who, with a whole train of officers, went to America with a commission signed by Deane as "General-in-Chief of Artillery" and a letter of recommendation from Dr. Franklin which Deane induced the doctor to write. As Gen. Knox was already in command of the American artillery, du Coudray's arrival produced a situation which ended only when the French artillerist was accidentally drowned in the Schuylkill River. We shall see what a penalty Deane paid for his excessive good nature.

IV

While Lee goes on with his jealous undermining of his colleagues, Franklin says nothing and attends to business. In his letters home, he never refers to Lee's constant suspicions of his associates and never makes any countercharges. But, due to the division of authority, neither he

nor his colleagues keep any accurate records or books, and there is no one who can refute Lee's charges of graft and corruption, some of which are aimed at Jonathan Williams, American naval agent at Nantes, who is Franklin's nephew. The confusion grows in the absence of orders or any other communications from home, and there must have been times when the French government wished that the entire American contingent, with the exception of Franklin, whom it trusted entirely, could be shipped back in charge of trained madhouse keepers.

Meantime the news from both home and abroad is edged with dark blue. Gen. Burgoyne has landed in America with a fresh army which is to cut off New York from New England. Gen. Howe has taken Philadelphia, and British officers are playing with the sacred electrical apparatus and stealing pictures in Franklin's own home.[1] The French loan has been exhausted, and Beaumarchais, pleading in vain for return shipments from America, is threatened with bankruptcy.

It is December 4, 1777. The American envoys are sitting in Franklin's home wondering what new appeal they shall make to the French government when a chaise is driven rapidly into the courtyard. There are shouts that it is a messenger from America, and Franklin and his colleagues hasten out to greet him. Jonathan Loring Austin, of Massachusetts, steps out with a smiling face. He brings the electrifying news that Gen. Burgoyne and his entire army have surrendered.

Within two days M. Gerard, secretary of the king's council, calls at Passy to offer congratulations. He adds that the Count de Vergennes is in a receptive mood regarding

[1] The portrait by Benjamin Wilson reproduced in this volume was taken from Franklin's home by Major André. It was returned to the American people in 1906 by Earl Grey, Governor-General of Canada, descendant of the Gen. Grey in charge of the evacuation of Philadelphia.

any proposals the commissioners may care to make. On December 8 Franklin sends an address to the king, thanking him for the loan of three million francs so far received and asking that an alliance between France, Spain, and the United States be considered.

A few days later the Count receives the envoys at a secret place outside Versailles, and on December 17 he sends word that the king has decided to conclude a treaty with the American colonies as soon as Spain is heard from. There ensue two or three weeks of negotiations, proposals, counter-proposals, visits, and the drawing up of documents, during which the fussy Lee makes more trouble than any other five men concerned. He finds fault with everything, and particularly complains about Franklin's dining out so often. It seems to have been about this time that Franklin began his twice-a-week visits to his neighbor, Madame Brillon, and took part in the other little flirtations which made him so happy and kept him in such a good humor.

V

"Do you know, my dear papa," wrote Mme. Brillon, whom the daughter of John Adams described as "one of the handsomest women in France," to the 72-year old doctor, "that people have the audacity to criticize my pleasant habit of sitting upon your knees, and yours of always asking me for what I always refuse? . . . I despise slanderers and am at peace with myself, but that is not enough. One must submit to what is called *Propriety* (the word varies in each century in each country) and sit less often on your knees. I shall surely love you no less, nor will our hearts be more or less pure; but we shall close the mouths of the malicious, and it is no small thing, even for the secure, to silence them."

VI

On Feb. 6, 1778, M. Gerard and the American commissioners meet and sign a Treaty of Amity and Commerce and a Treaty of Alliance between France and the United States. In this hour of triumph Franklin wears the suit of Manchester velvet in which he was clothed when he was the victim of the attack before the British Privy Council in the Cockpit at London. It is agreed that profound secrecy shall be maintained until word comes that the treaties have been ratified by Congress. But of course the usual leak occurs, and within a few days the whole of Europe knows about the treaties, including England, where Lord North's Conciliation Bill is brought out too late to be anything but a feeble anti-climax.

"Never have I seen a man," wrote Franklin's friend Le Roy to the Abbé Fauchet, "so happy, so joyous, as M. Franklin on the day that Lord Stormont, the British Ambassador, left Paris owing to our rupture with his court. We dined together, and he, who was ordinarily very calm, very tranquil, appeared on this day, from his exclamations of joy, to be another man."

Events follow fast. On March 20 the American commissioners are summoned to meet Louis XVI at Versailles. Deane and Lee appear in the rigidly prescribed court dress, with wig and sword; but Franklin, with a superb dignity concealing his showman's heart, emerges in clothes of plain but rich brown velvet, set off by a cascade of ruffles at breast and wrist, white silk stockings, and silver buckles.

There is a story that when ushered into the presence of the king he broke down slightly and seemed on the verge of weeping, but recovered himself when he saw that to Louis XVI, who would far rather have been in the hunting field than attending elaborate ceremonials, this was quite an

BRICK PILLAR MARKING FRANKLIN'S GRAVE, PHILADELPHIA

IT CONTAINS QUOTATIONS FROM ENCOMIUMS BY WASHINGTON, MIRABEAU, AND TURGOT.

ordinary occasion. In fact, Arthur Lee, who could be depended upon to have a jealous eye for details, afterwards wrote that the king's hair was hanging down upon his shoulders undressed, and that he had "no appearance of preparation." This may have been due, however, to the Count de Vergennes, who is said to have advised the king to take Franklin by the hand in English fashion and to converse with him informally.

Madame du Deffand, who kept a kind of political salon in Paris and though blind learned everything, gives a different account of Franklin's reception. In a letter to Horace Walpole, dated March 22, 1778, she wrote:

"Mr. Franklin has been presented to the king. He was accompanied by some twenty insurgents, three or four of whom wore a uniform. Franklin wore a dress of reddish brown (mordoré) velvet, white hose, his hair hanging loose, his spectacles on his nose, and a white hat under his arm. I do not know what he said, but the reply of the king was very gracious, as well towards the United States as toward Franklin their deputy. He praised his conduct and that of all his compatriots. I do not know what title he will have, but he will go to court every Tuesday, like all the rest of the diplomatic corps."

The recognition thus bestowed upon the American envoys, signalizing the fact that France is ready to begin war in support of American independence, causes an uneasy twinge in England, where there is already an undercurrent of desire to patch up a peace. Even George III writes to Lord North on March 26:

"The many instances of the inimical conduct of Franklin towards this country makes me aware that hatred of this country is the constant object of his mind. . . . Yet I think it so desirable to end the war with that country, to be enabled with redoubled ardor to avenge the faithless and

insolent conduct of France, that I think it may be proper to keep open the channels of intercourse with that insidious man."

These channels are, in fact, never closed. All the time Franklin is in more or less constant communication with his faithful friends in England, who keep up a ceaseless propaganda for peace, and the British government, fully aware of the interchange of letters, does nothing to stop them. In addition, repeated efforts are made in disguised form to draw Franklin into conversation regarding terms of peace, but his invariable reply is that such hidden negotiations are useless, since nothing but complete independence will now satisfy the united colonies.

VII

Other events of interest occur in this year. Voltaire, who has greeted the beginning of Louis XVI's reign with the remark, "We are in the age of gold — up to our necks," returns to Paris from his long exile, surrounded by delirious crowds. The American commissioners pay the old eagle a visit. He converses with Franklin in English, proud of his ability to "speak in the language of a Franklin." He greets William Temple Franklin with the saying, "My child, God and liberty! Recollect those two words." A few weeks later Franklin and Voltaire are again brought together at a meeting of the Academy of Sciences. The crowd clamors for them to greet each other. They rise and shake hands. The crowd renews its clamor. "Embrace!" The two worn old veterans oblige. They take each other in their arms and kiss each other on the cheek, French fashion. The crowd shouts its ecstasy. John Adams says the cry spread over all Europe, "How charming it was to see

Solon and Sophocles embrace! " In a few weeks Voltaire is dead.

In the same year, tired and almost forgotten, dies Jean Jacques Rousseau. The mighty are falling. The end of a century approaches, and with it an epoch. After it the deluge and the hoarse cry of " Ça ira! "

Chapter XXIX

A Chapter of Altercations

I

IN the spring of 1778 Franklin writes two significant letters. One is to the president of the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. It is meant to anticipate the arrival there of Silas Deane, who has been called home to give an account of his operations as American agent in France before the coming of Franklin and Lee. John Adams has been appointed to succeed him. Franklin's letter praises Deane as "a faithful, active and able minister."

The other letter is to Lee. The old gentleman must have been choked with suppressed ire for some months, to have been able to use, even towards a trouble-making colleague, such scorching language:

"It is true that I have omitted answering some of your letters, particularly your angry ones, in which you, with very magisterial airs, schooled and documented me, as if I had been one of your domestics. I saw in the strongest light the importance of our living in decent civility towards each other while our great affairs were depending here; I saw your jealous, suspicious, malignant, and quarrelsome temper, which was daily manifesting itself against Mr. Deane and almost every other person you had any concern with. I therefore passed your affronts in silence, did not answer, but burnt your angry letters, and received you, when I next saw you, with the same civility as if you had never wrote them. Perhaps I may still pursue the same conduct, and

not send you these. I believe I shall not, unless exceedingly pressed by you; for, of all things, I hate altercation."

If Franklin, above all things, hates strife, Lee with equal intensity hates peace. He has filled the homeward mails with insinuations against Deane; and when Congress, after a long silence, receives a packet of dispatches from Franklin and Lee which has been rifled and blank paper substituted, Lee even hints that he believes Franklin knows something about it. Congress, previously only vaguely aware of the dissensions between its envoys in Paris, becomes suddenly suspicious. Consequently, when Deane, accompanied by M. Gerard as the French envoy, reaches Philadelphia, he is treated, not like a returned hero and deserving patriot, as he expects, but more like a poor and undesirable relative. It is seven weeks before he even receives an audience. Meantime Arthur Lee has put new barbs on his accusations. He declares that Deane has kept all his transactions to himself, has refused to keep his colleagues informed, and has left his accounts in "studied confusion." He charges that Deane's private expenses have been nearly twice those of any other colleague. As a matter of fact, the records show that from December, 1776, to March, 1778, Deane, who bore all the early burdens, received on his private account $20,926; Lee $12,749; and Franklin $12,214.

However, Deane is only able to answer that all his papers and accounts are in Paris, that they will be found in order, and that he has done nothing of which his country can be ashamed. But his mysterious arrangement with Beaumarchais and the fuss made over the du Coudray affair has raised up loud and vocal critics. In December, 1778, Deane makes the mistake of publishing an angry and verbose defense of himself. It makes a bad impression on public opinion, which is scandalized by the revelation of the broils going on between the American commissioners in Paris.

Public opinion decides to "take it out" on someone; and at once does so on Deane himself. Even Thomas Paine comes out with a public letter taking the part of Lee against Deane. Not even Franklin's praise can save him.

After begging and waiting for months for the audit which will vindicate him, Deane turns bitter and ugly, develops a persecution complex, goes over to the English with his friend Benedict Arnold, and finally dies in a broody obscurity.

Almost half a century elapsed before Congress recognized the claims of his heirs. Though it was prodded into making some payments to Beaumarchais, it never met in full the claims of that romantic supporter of America's cause.

II

Second only to Lee as a trouble-hatcher is Ralph Izard, of South Carolina, who has been hanging around Paris until the Grand Duke of Tuscany, to whose court he has been appointed, shall be ready to receive him. Tuscany never does receive him, so Izard, having nothing else in particular to do, employs himself in attempts to polish up his own prestige as an envoy and in trying to make Franklin consult him on all matters pertaining to international diplomacy. He, Lee, and Lee's elder brother, William Lee, appointee to Vienna, form a cabal which suffers anguish whenever it sees Dr. Franklin enjoying the deferential attentions of the French court and people. Izard follows Lee's attempts to discredit Franklin in his letters home. He writes of Franklin's "effrontery" and "chicanery," and declares that he believes the doctor to be under no restraint of "virtue and honor."

And now comes John Adams, later the second President of the United States, to unravel the tangle and iron out the

differences between Franklin and the other agents. Congress, even if it had tried very hard, could not have selected an individual less fitted for a place on the American commission to France than this honest, serious, well-meaning, detail-loving lawyer and pedant straight from the mold of the Brahmin caste in New England. He goes about his assumed business with great seriousness, first annoying the French and then causing their concealed snickers. He lends an attentive ear to Izard's tale of woe and graft, and then discharges Jonathan Williams, Franklin's nephew, from the naval agency at Nantes. He next addresses himself with pronounced ostentation to the task of sorting out and properly filing Franklin's papers in the house at Passy. In so doing, he comes very near scoring over the doctor, who, even at the age of 72, has never been able to observe that principle of Order which was No. 3 in his youthful creed. Even his admirers have protested at the manner in which he permits important documents to lie about. However, Franklin betrays no annoyance; he agrees to the discharge of Williams, even though there is no evidence of his malfeasance, and makes no objection to Adams's taking apartments in the Passy house and stowing away the papers.

Adams's third attack is on this very house, the elegant Hôtel de Valentinois. He learns that M. Ray de Chaumont, the French merchant, has lent a court of it to Franklin and has refused to accept any compensation, merely requesting that at the end of the war a souvenir in the shape of a tract of land in America. Adams is horrified: this is not regular. He writes to M. de Chaumont asking him to place a rental valuation on that part of the house occupied by the Americans. The owner declines to be businesslike. He replies politely that it is "so much the better for me to have immortalized my house by receiving into it Dr. Franklin and his associates!"

M. de Chaumont was right in foreseeing immortality for his house. One hundred and eighteen years later, on March 8, 1896, the Historical Society of Auteuil and Passy placed on the site a plaque inscribed as follows:

"Here stood a building, part of the Hôtel de Valentinois, in which Franklin dwelt from 1777 to 1785 and on which he placed the first lightning rod erected in France."

As time goes on, it becomes more and more apparent that there is only one solution to an anomalous condition: the American commission to France must have a head and in cases of dispute he must be the sole plenipotentiary. Each of the five agents is aware of this, and each so writes to Congress. Congress finally acts. In February, 1779, Gen. Lafayette arrives in Paris on leave of absence from America. He brings a commission to Franklin as the sole plenipotentiary to the court of France.

III

The French receive this news with pleasure unalloyed and undisguised. They have recognized in Franklin a man with whom they can do business and whom they understand. As their contempt for the boorish behavior of the other envoys deepens, their admiration for Franklin increases. They have learned that his more sturdy traits are unshakeable; at the same time his little foibles are those which they share and sympathize with — his love for bright women, a bottle of wine, and mellow conversation in the midst of good company. He becomes the fad, the rage, the cult of the hour. They make innumerable portraits, engravings, medals, cameos, medallions, statuettes, and busts of him, mounting his image on their jewelry and on their walls. Painters and sculptors such as Nini, Caffieri, Cochin and Houdon beg him to pose. Sophisticated women are thrilled

by his notice. Statesmen, scientists, philosophers, and genial old abbés compete for his society and repeat his pawky sayings with infinite relish. If a day intervenes when there is no new Franklin anecdote, they invent one.

Envoys like John Adams attended strictly to business and failed in their mission; Franklin neglected business — at judicious intervals — and success emptied its largest cornucopias over his head.

All this incense, however, failed to affect either the size or levelness of Franklin's cranium. He was too experienced, too seasoned, in the ways of the world for that, even had his native shrewdness permitted it. There is proof in this letter to his daughter Sally:

"The clay medallion you say you gave to Mr. Hopkinson was the first of the kind made in France. A variety of others have been made since of different sizes; some to be set in the lids of snuff boxes, and some so small as to be worn in rings, and the numbers sold are incredible. These, with the pictures, busts, and prints (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere) have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon, so that he durst not do anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him wherever he should venture to show it. It is said by learned etymologists that the name *doll*, for the images children play with, is derived from the word *idol*. From the number of dolls now being made of him, he may be truly said, *in that sense*, to be i-doll-ized in this country."

IV

One letter received by Franklin about this time must have given the old gentleman particular pleasure; for it was from a man in whose behalf he had assumed much responsibility and for whom he was predicting great things. It said:

"In the fullness of my heart I congratulate you on your well merited appointment, and I trust you will believe that I do now and ever shall rejoice in every circumstance that tends to the honor or happiness of a great and good man, who has taught me as well as his country to regard him with a veneration and affection which proceeds directly from the heart, and that is due only to the best of friends."

This was from John Paul Jones, Scotchman, sentimentalist, sea raider, and madcap, with some element in him of the swashbuckler which Franklin, who once longed to run away to sea himself, must have loved. Jones was then at the port of L'Orient, where he was busy preparing the *Bon Homme Richard* — "Poor Richard" — for the doughty deeds which were to thrill many generations of American schoolboys. It was a long letter that Jones wrote, containing some labored reference to a mysterious story about himself which he felt he must explain. This compelled Franklin to give an explanation in his turn, which he did in a reply which must have given at first glance some consternation to the earnest captain:

"The story I alluded to is this: L'Abbé Rochon had just been telling me and Madame Chaumont that the old Gardiner and his wife had complained to the Curate of your having attacked her in the Garden about 7 o'clock the evening before your Departure and attempted to ravish her, relating all the circumstances, some of which are not fit for me to write. The serious part of it was that three of her sons were determined to kill you, if you had not gone off; the rest occasioned some laughing, for the old woman being one of the . . . ugliest that we may find in a thousand, Madame Chaumont said it gave a high idea of the Strength, Appetite & Courage of the Americans. A day or two after I learned it was the femme de chambre of Mlle. Chaumont who had disguised herself in a suit, I think, of your Cloaths,

to divert herself under that Masquerade, as is customary the last evening of Carnival; and that meeting the old woman in the garden, she took it into her head to try her Chastity, which it seems was found Proof."

V

It was well that Franklin could find recreation in composing 18th century pleasantries, for he soon found that in becoming plenipotentiary he had not rid himself of the malevolent Arthur Lee. Lee was supposed to go to Spain as envoy, but instead, he, his brother William, and Ralph Izard remained in Paris to plague Franklin. This precious trio seem to have occupied themselves in fomenting one new trouble for Franklin every day. If their ingenuity sometimes failed them, their appetites fell off and insomnia ensued. When they succeeded, they went to bed tranquil and happy.

Congress at length appointed a committee of thirteen to settle the matter once for all. It is a matter of record that only by the width of an eyelash did they escape recalling Franklin and appointing Lee in his stead! In which case the American revolt against the mother country would have ended far otherwise than it did, for Franklin alone was able to raise the money in France for which Congress was incessantly importuning him. With their withering contempt for Lee and his allies, the French were more than once inclined to close their purses, but Franklin, with his adroit persistency and humorous candor, they were seldom able to refuse, though their own finances were becoming weaker every day. The loans granted to Franklin for the United States totaled 26,000,000 francs, beginning with two millions in 1777 and ending with six millions in 1782.

The Lees and Izard were at last recalled. They went

back home to air their grievances in the presence of those who were only too ready to believe that Franklin was a grafter, a spendthrift, and an unprincipled old wretch. Franklin's hands were at last free to attend to the even greater tasks which he knew were coming. If he celebrated the passing of his late confrères at all, it was doubtless to go over to the home of his attractive neighbor, Madame Brillon, and there sing his favorite French song. The name of it was *Les Petits Oiseaux* — "The Little Birds."

Chapter XXX

Franklin and Madame Brillon

I

IN the course of the twenty-five years and more which Franklin spent abroad in the service of his country, he met many able and eminent personages. Most of them were glad to become his friends. Those who ran counter to him, or who in any way engaged in a contest with him, lived to regret it; for though he disliked strife, his mental agility, adroitness, and subtlety, added to his wide reading and observation of human nature, made him, when aroused, a sinuous and doughty opponent.

It remained for a woman of France to reveal herself as fully his equal, and at times his superior, in those very qualities in which he most excelled. She was a match for him in wit, in fantasy, in verbal fencing, and gay and sophisticated dialectics, while in subtle feeling, intuition, culture, and mastery of language, she surpassed him. During his ardent flirtations with her, though he brought to bear every atom of his skill and persistence, he never quite prevailed.

This was Madame d'Hardancourt Brillon, wife of Franklin's neighbor, a French official named Jouy de Brillon; and hostess to Franklin twice and sometimes three times weekly at her leafy home, Moulin Joli (Pretty Mill). She was the chiefest of the women who called him "dear papa"; she once wrote him, "My heart loved you from the first moment of our acquaintance"; and she sometimes almost knelt before him in a kind of humble adoration.

The 119 letters from her to Franklin which have been preserved indicate, between the lines, why she encouraged Franklin's friendship and even permitted a little of his unsubtle love-making. As the wife of a man many years her senior, who neglected her, she was lonely. As a religious and introspective woman, her mind tended towards introversion; and as a daughter who had had what pyschologists term a father-fixation, she craved affection and fatherly advice. Franklin, with the high spirits which the company of women imparted to him, with his fondness for broad jokes, and his love for material good things, offset and checked her loneliness and constant brooding, while his indulgence for human weaknesses and his gift of paternal sympathy made her beg for his presence at times as if it were the world's greatest boon.

There was one other respect in which she surpassed him in his own field. She was the superior letter writer. Beside hers, Franklin's letters are all in one key, and are a little complacent besides. Madame Brillon's letters are orchestrations. They sound the 'cello as well as the flute. They contain a higher as well as a lower gamut of notes than Franklin's. The following is one of the many specimens preserved in the library of the American Philosophical Society at Philadelphia. It was written from La Thuillerie, her mother's home, just after a week-end visit from Franklin:

"I was too happy Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, my dear papa. I was too happy. My present depression proves it. I have not yet been willing to visit your room, because everything would tell me in a manner too heartfelt that you are no longer there. But I have been in our fields. I have there seen the trace of your footsteps everywhere; the trees have seemed to me to be a sad green; the water of our

streams seems to flow more softly. These are not compliments which I pay you; it is the simple expression of my heart to which I yield. It is to my father that his tender, loving child speaks. I had a father, the best of men. He was my first and my best friend. I lost him before his time. You have often said to me, can I not take the place of those whom you mourn? and you have told me of the humane custom of certain savages who adopt the prisoners they make in war, and let them take the place of their relatives who are gone. You have taken the place in my heart of this father, whom I loved, whom I revered so much. The harrowing grief I felt at his loss has been changed to a sweet melancholy which is dear to me and which I owe to you. You have gained in me a child, a friend the more. I have come to have for you the idolatry which all have for a great man. I had a curiosity to see you; my self-love has been flattered by receiving you in my home; since then I have seen in you only your soul sensitive to friendship, your goodness, your simplicity; and I have said, this man is so good that he will love me, and I began to love you well in order to bind you to the same for me."

At another time she wrote:

"My papa loves me. He loves to know that I think of him; he loves to hear me say it. My heart, which is always ready to say it to him, guides my pen, and the word *aimer* (to love) is always formed in the nib."

"Always formed in the nib" — Franklin could never have said anything so delicately poetic as that. We have seen how, during Franklin's tender years, his father permanently chilled the germ of whatever poetry then dwelt in his nature; and at a time when Benjamin might have been developing any poetic gifts, how circumstances found him

turning out, instead, Poor Richard's maxims for fishmongers and pawnbrokers.

A letter by Franklin to Madame Brillon, during her absence, is as follows:

"I often pass before your house. It wears a desolate look to me. Heretofore I have broken the commandments in coveting it along with my neighbor's wife. Now I do not covet it. Thus I am less the sinner. But with regard to the wife, I always find these commandments very inconvenient, and I am sorry that we are cautioned to practise them. Should you in your travels find yourself at the home of St. Peter, ask him to recall them, as intended only for the Jews, and as too irksome for good Christians."

During the eight-year friendship between Franklin and this, his neighbor's wife, he must have written her nearly as many letters as he received, for he was a faithful, if sometimes dilatory, correspondent. But only a few of them are known to exist, and these are mostly rough drafts from which he made clean and corrected copies. It is to one of these lost letters that Mme. Brillon seems to refer in the following:

"I found in it evidences of your friendship, and a tinge of that gayety and gallantry which make all women love you, because you love them all. Your proposal to carry me on your wings, as if you were the angel Gabriel, made me laugh, but I would not accept it, although I am no longer very young nor a virgin. That angel was a sly fellow, and your nature united to his would become too dangerous. I should be afraid of miracles happening, and miracles between women and angels will not always bring a redeemer. . . . If you had been at Avignon with us, it is there you would have wished to embrace people! The women there

THE FRANKLIN CORNER IN THE CHRIST CHURCH BURIAL GROUND, PHILADELPHIA

A. — GRAVE OF JOHN READ, FATHER OF DEBORAH READ FRANKLIN; 1. — GRAVE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN AND HIS WIFE, DEBORAH; 2. — GRAVE OF SARAH FRANKLIN AND HER HUSBAND, RICHARD BACHE; 3. — GRAVE OF WILLIAM BACHE AND HIS WIFE, CATHERINE WISTAR BACHE. ARROW INDICATES FRANKLIN BACHE HUNTINGTON, GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-GRANDSON OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

are charming; I thought of you every time I saw one of them."

Madame Brillon's own wit and her appreciation of it in others stimulated Franklin to do some of the gayest and most graceful writing of his life. It was for her that he wrote many of the "Bagatelles," or short pieces, which he had set up and printed on his private press in the basement of the house at Passy. Among them were *The Story of the Whistle, The Ephemera, The Petition of the Left Hand, The Handsome and Deformed Leg, Dialogue between Franklin and the Gout,* and *The Morals of Chess.*

Franklin's addiction to chess once led him to start a game in her bathroom, it seems, and he went right on playing long after his modest hostess had finished her Saturday night splash and wished to emerge into the world again. His apology has been preserved, as follows:

Saturday, 11 at night

"On arriving at home I was surprised to find that it was nearly 11 o'clock. I fear that in forgetting everything else by our too great attention to chess, we have inconvenienced you very much by keeping you so long in the bath. Tell me, my dear friend, how you are this morning? Never again will I consent to begin a match in your bathroom. Can you forgive me this indiscretion?"

Madame Brillon could, and doubtless did; but it is terrifying to contemplate what might have happened if this indiscretion of the worthy doctor's had come to the knowledge of the stern and rockbound patriots back home. It would have lent color to the darkest insinuations of Lee and Izard.

II

The dialogue with the gout, which was reprinted in America in a bowdlerized form and not as Franklin wrote it, drew this reply from Madame Brillon:

"There would be many little things, in truth, to criticize in your logic, which you fortify so well, my dear papa. 'When I was a young man,' you say, 'and enjoyed the favors of the sex more freely than at present, I had no gout.' Therefore, one might reply to this, when I threw myself out of the window, I didn't break my leg. Therefore, you could have the gout without having deserved it, and you could have well deserved it, as I believe, and not have had it. . . ."

There was a stage in the correspondence between Franklin and Madame Brillon when he intimated that he was not satisfied with being merely her friend. He wrote:

"I am incredibly hungry . . . and you have given me nothing to eat. I was a stranger and I was almost as lovesick as Colin when you were singing. You have neither taken me in nor cured me, nor eased me. You who are rich as an archbishop in all the Christian and moral virtues, and could sacrifice a small share of some of them without visible loss, you tell me that it is asking too much, and you are not willing to do it. That is your charity to a poor wretch who once enjoyed affluence, and is unfortunately reduced to soliciting alms. . . ."

Her reply was firmly in the negative, as follows:

"You adopted me as your daughter. I chose you for my father. What do you expect of me? Friendship? Well, I love you as a daughter should love her father. The purest, the most respectful, the tenderest, affection for

you fills my soul. You asked me for a 'louis.' I gave it to you, and yet you murmur at not getting another one, which does not belong to me. It is a treasure which has been entrusted to me, my good papa. I guard it and will always guard it carefully. Even if you were, like Colin, sick, I could not cure you, but nevertheless whatever you may think or say, no one in this world loves you more than I."

This should have sufficed to put a 72-year-old admirer in his place, and keep him there; but Franklin more than once returned to the charge in terms that have caused certain of the collectors and editors of his writings to denounce him as not quite a gentleman. These commentators perhaps err in taking Franklin's amorous letters too seriously. In addressing ladies in such terms, he but followed the manners of his century, which were, as already shown, rather bold and broad. His many feminine correspondents do not seem to have found fault with his gallant expressions. On the contrary, they, as the saying is, came back for more; which is sufficient proof of Madame Brillon's observation that propriety is a thing that varies from century to century and country to country.

III

Madame Brillon occasionally confessed to Franklin her difficulties with her husband. We know little of this gentleman, except that he was large and stout, was apparently of a jovial and roaming disposition, was fond of telling stories, and was himself an admirer of Franklin, to whom he apparently gave the run of his house without misgiving. His wife once wrote to Franklin:

"I know that the man to whom my fate has bound me is a man of merit. I respect him as much as I should and

as much as he deserves. I have perhaps always loved him beyond what his heart can return. Twenty-four years difference in our ages, his severe training, with mine perhaps a little too much cared for on the side of pleasing talents, have tightened his heart and expanded mine. My papa, marriages in this country are made for a weight in gold; on one side of the scale the wealth of a young man, on the other that of a girl. When equality is found the matter ends to the satisfaction of the parents. They do not think of considering the taste, the age, or the relations of character. A girl whose heart contains the fire of youth is married to a man who extinguishes it. Yet one requires that the woman be virtuous! My friend, this history is mine, and many others'. I shall strive to prevent its being that of my daughters, but alas, shall I be mistress of their fate? "

Again she wrote:

" It is difficult for a woman who would give her life without hesitation to insure her husband's happiness to see the results of her exertions destroyed by intrigue and falsehood. . . . Adieu, you whom I love so much, my kind papa. Yesterday you called me 'Madame,' and my heart shrank. I examined myself to see whether I had done you any wrong, or if I had failings you would not mention to me. Pardon, my friend, I am not reproaching you; I am accusing myself of a weakness. I was born much too sensitive for my happiness and for that of my friends. Cure me or pity me; if you can, do one or the other. Tomorrow, Wednesday, you will come to tea, will you not? . . ."

The intrigue referred to by Mme. Brillon apparently did not abate, and one day a terror came upon her. She sent Franklin this note:

"... It is of the utmost necessity that I should have a long and detailed conversation with you. I want to have you sound the very depths of my soul and know those who have wounded me so cruelly. Perhaps it is important for you to know something which some day may affect you. Will you, can you, receive me the day after tomorrow, Wednesday, at ten o'clock in the morning and close your doors to all others for an hour, so that I may pour forth my soul in yours, and so gain consolation and counsel? Answer, if only a line, at once. It is unnecessary that anyone should know I am writing you, and that I am coming to see you. Adieu, you are my father, and that is why I crave more than ever the certainty of your friendship."

On the day and at the hour appointed, the American plenipotentiary ceased, for an hour, to be an ambassador, admiralty judge, money-raiser, accountant, scientific authority, and maid-of-all-work to a distant Congress, and became a woman's priest.

In the confessional she found the relief she craved. She wrote:

"My soul is calmer, my dear papa, now that it has overflowed in yours, now that it no longer fears lest Mlle. J. take up her quarters with you, and prove a torment to you and your dear son. ... My husband will perhaps be for a long time still under her influence. Goodby, oh you dear friend, you whom I revere, whom I love. I have read and reread your letter. I shall conform myself to the truth it contains. I shall try to become a worthy pupil of a great philosopher and sage. I shall try to show the best of papas and friends that his daughter does not conceive friendship as consisting merely in the pleasure of seeing him and demonstrating it to him; that she does not wish to be content merely with pleasing him by such attractions as he meets

with every day and in a far higher degree in the society of many other women; rather far by the completion and fulfilment of all the virtues which should make her, in all truth, the lawful friend of her good papa were she ugly, were she a man, in a word, were she anything else than in a state of life wherein the senses play their part in the gallantry men show to women. Until tomorrow — tomorrow is Saturday, is it not, dear papa? And you didn't come last Wednesday. . . ."

Though she continually kept her elderly suitor at arm's length, she did not fail to reproach him for fancied neglect. Once, when out of town, she wrote:

"What, not one word, my kind papa? Have you forgot your daughter? You have doubtless encountered so many lovely ladies on your path that they have distracted you. Then remember that friendship, that confidence, that feeling so sweet and true, which your daughter cherishes for you, and consider whether in these twelve days since she left you, her heart ought to approve of you. This is not a rebuke, but you know that it is but a step from reproach to indifference. I neither can nor do I wish to reveal even the appearance of coldness toward you, consequently I cannot help very gently, very tenderly complaining of your neglect."

It was possibly in reply to this letter that Franklin referred to "the kind of avarice that leads you to monopolize all my affections and not allow me any for the agreeable ladies of your country." He concluded by offering to do all she asked provided that she consent to an agreement containing nine articles. The eighth and ninth were as follows: "That when he is with her he shall do everything he pleases," and "that he shall love no other women no matter

how agreeable they may be." To the last this footnote was appended: "The other women can go drown themselves."

Madame Brillon's answer to this is not on record, but no doubt it was in a clear but graceful negative. She knew how to keep the sting from her refusals. Her reply to Franklin's proposal regarding a marriage between his grandson, William Temple Franklin, and one of her daughters — she had two, named Cunegonde and Aldegonde — was gentle but plain. There were insuperable obstacles, she said, chief of which was the difference in religious belief. She spoke of the young man whom she liked to call "M. Franklinet" with but faint praise; possibly she read him better than his grandfather; Temple was an efficient worker and secretary as long as he was under Franklin's direction, but in later years he showed himself to have but few of his grandsire's qualities.

In other respects she was ready to obey Franklin's lightest wish, and it is probable that it was she who corrected his state papers and documents into grammatical and dignified French. She once complained of a paper by him that "the corrector of your French spoiled your work." She added this sound advice. "Leave your works as they are. Use words that say things, and laugh at grammarians who by their purity weaken all your sentences."

It is a happy picture that she drew of what took place during Franklin's semi-weekly visits to her home in this letter written from La Thuillerie:

"How are you, my good papa? Never has it cost me so much to love you. Every evening it seems to me that you would be very glad to see me, and every evening I think of you. On Monday, the 21st, I shall come for you. I hope that you will then be well on your feet, and that the teas of

Wednesday and Saturday and that of Sunday morning will recover all their brilliance. I will bring you la bonne évèque. My fat husband will make us laugh, our children will laugh together, our big neighbor will quiz, the Abbés La Roche and Morellet will eat all the butter, Mme. Grand, her amiable niece, and M. Grand will not harm the gathering. Father Pagin will play 'God of Love' on his violin, I the march on the piano, and you 'Petits Oiseaux' on the armonica."

But halcyon hours such as these do not go on forever, and at last comes a day when Franklin, feeble with age and gout, packs to go home, and Madame Brillon writes this parting letter:

"I could not bring myself to bid you a final farewell, my good friend. My heart was so overflowing on leaving you that I feared that for you and for me another such grievous experience would only add to the deep sorrow which this separation causes me, without adding further proof of the tender and unalterable friendship I have pledged to you for all time. Every day of my existence memory reminds me that a great man, a sage, once deigned to be my friend. My thoughts accompany him wherever he goes. My heart mourns him unceasingly; unceasingly I shall say, always: 'Eight years I spent in the company of Dr. Franklin. They are passed and I shall never see him more.' Nothing in the world can ever console me for that loss, unless it be the conviction of that peace and happiness you must experience in the bosom of your family, and that fame which you surely enjoy in the land that owes you its liberty. O my friend, my good friend! I pray you may be happy. Tell me that you are, let me hear from you, and if it be sweet for you to recall the woman who loved you most dearly, think of me, think of all those members of my

family who were and always must be your best friends. Goodby, my heart fails me, it cannot bear being torn asunder from you; but that it shall never be, my loving papa. You will often realize its presence near you. Question it, and it will answer you."

Chapter XXXI

Franklin and Madame Helvetius

I

AN altogether different sort of person was another feminine friend in whose home Franklin passed many hours of pleasing relaxation. This was Madame Helvetius, widow of the philosopher Claude Adrien Helvetius, who died in 1771, leaving behind a fortune which he had made as one of the French farmers-general. She lived at the suburb of Auteuil, and hence was called by Franklin "Our Lady of Auteuil." Franklin was accustomed to dine with her at least once a week, usually in company with the genial abbés Morellet and de la Roche and the physician Cabanis.

She lived in a handsome house which she had purchased from Quentin de la Tour, painter of the king. Franklin was first taken there by Turgot, the statesman, who had once been a suitor of Mme. Helvetius when she was the Countess Ligniville. Here she was mistress of a salon at which many celebrated men were visitors, including Condorcet, the philosopher. She maintained a regiment of cats and had so much furniture that Franklin once called her home "the House of a Thousand Sofas."

"His conversation," wrote the Abbé Morellet of Franklin, "was exquisite — a perfect good nature, a simplicity of manners, an uprightness of mind that made itself felt in the smallest things, an extreme gentleness, and above all, a sweet serenity that easily became gayety. . . . He sel-

dom spoke long, except in composing tales — a talent in which he excelled, and which he greatly liked in others. His tales always had a philosophical aim; many had the form of apologues, which he himself invented, and he applied those which he had not made with infinite justice."

One of the bagatelles which Franklin wrote for his hostess and which the Abbé quotes, relates to a visit to the Elysian Fields. There Franklin encountered Helvetius himself, who announced that he has consoled himself for his separation from Madame Helvetius by taking another wife. When this new wife appeared, bearing a glass of nectar, "I instantly recognized her," says Franklin in his essay, "as Mrs. Franklin, my old American friend. I reclaimed her, but she said to me coldly, 'I have been your good wife forty-nine years and four months, almost half a century; be content with that.' Dissatisfied with this refusal of my Eurydice, I immediately resolved to quit those ungrateful shades, and to return to this good world to see again the sun and you. Here I am. *Let us avenge ourselves.*"

Two pen-pictures of Madame Helvetius have come down to us. One is by Franklin himself in a letter to Cabanis:

"We often talk of you at Auteuil, where everybody loves you. I now and then offend our good lady, who cannot long retain her displeasure, but, sitting in state on her sopha (*sic*), extends graciously her long, handsome arm, says, 'la; baisez ma main; je vous pardonne,'[1] with all the dignity of a sultaness. She is as busy as ever, endeavoring to make every creature about her happy, from the Abbés down thro' all ranks of the family to the birds and Poupon."

In another letter to Cabanis Franklin wrote:

"M. Franklin is sorry to have caused the least hurt to

[1] "There; kiss my hand; I forgive you."

those beautiful tresses that he always regards with pleasure. If that lady likes to pass her days with him, he would like as much to pass his nights with her; and since he has already given many of his days to her, although he had such a small remnant of them to give, she would seem ungrateful to have never given him a single one of her nights, which run continually to pure waste, without promoting the good fortune of anyone except Poupon." [2]

The other picture is by Abigail Adams, the able but acidulous wife of John Adams:

"She entered the room with a careless, jaunty air; upon seeing ladies who were strangers to her, she bawled out, 'Ah! mon Dieu, where is Franklin? Why did you not tell me there were ladies here?' You must suppose her speaking all this in French. 'How I look!' said she, taking hold of a chemise made of tiffany, which she had on over a blue lute-string, and which looked as much upon the decay as her beauty, for she was once a handsome woman; her hair was frizzled; over it she had a small straw hat, with a dirty gauze half-handkerchief round it, and a bit of dirtier gauze than ever my maids wore was bowed on behind. She had a black gauze scarf thrown over her shoulders. She ran out of the room; when she returned, the Doctor entered at one door, she at the other; upon which she ran forward to him, caught him by the hand, 'Hélas, Franklin'; then gave him a double kiss, one upon each cheek, and another upon his forehead. When we went into the room to dine, she was placed between the Doctor and Mr. Adams. She carried on the chief of the conversation at dinner, frequently locking her hand into the Doctor's, and sometimes spreading her arms upon the backs of both

[2] One of the Madame's eighteen cats.

the gentlemen's chairs, then throwing her arm carelessly upon the Doctor's neck.

"I should have been greatly astonished at this conduct, if the good Doctor had not told me that in this lady I should see a genuine Frenchwoman, wholly free from affectation or stiffness of behavior, and one of the best women in the world. For this I must take the Doctor's word; but I should have set her down for a very bad one, although sixty years of age, and a widow. I own I was highly disgusted, and never wish for an acquaintance with any ladies of this cast. After dinner she threw herself upon a settee, where she showed more than her feet. She had a little lap-dog, who, was, next to the Doctor, her favorite. This she kissed, and when he wet the floor she wiped it up with her chemise. This is one of the Doctor's most intimate friends, with whom he dines once every week, and she with him. She is rich, and my near neighbor; but I have not yet visited her. Thus you see, my dear, that manners differ exceedingly in different countries. I hope, however, to find amongst the French ladies manners more consistent with my ideas of decency, or I shall be a mere recluse."

The statement regarding "manners" by Mrs. Adams, closely paralleling that by Madame Brillon in a letter to Franklin quoted in a previous chapter, would seem to indicate that the good lady believed herself to have come from a country where manners were so different as to be impeccable. But before the word of the pot concerning the behavior of the kettle is accepted as authentic, let us consult an authority on certain urban manners as noted in America during the same period. The writer of this lively letter is Miss Rebecca Franks, of Philadelphia, who is describing for the benefit of her sister Abigail, wife of Andrew Hamilton, a visit to eighteenth century New York:

"Flatbush, August 10, 1781[3]

". . . I will do our ladies, that is Philadelphians, the justice to say they have more cleverness in the turn of an eye than the N Y girls have in their whole composition. With what ease have I seen a Chew, a Penn, Oswald, Allen, and a thousand others entertain a large circle of both sexes, and the conversation without the aid of cards not flag or seem the least strained or stupid. Here, or more properly speaking, in N Y, you enter the room with a formal set curtsey and after the how do's, 'tis a fine, or a bad day, and those trifling nothings are finish'd, all's a dead calm till the cards are introduced, when you see pleasure dancing in the eyes of all the matrons and they seem to gain new life. The misses, if they have a favorite swain, frequently decline playing for the pleasure of making love — for to all appearances 'tis the ladies and not the gentlemen that shew a preference nowadays. 'Tis here, I fancy, always leap year. For my part, that am used to quite another mode of behaviour, I cannot help shewing my surprise, perhaps they call it ignorance, when I see a lady single out her pet to lean almost in his arms at an Assembly or play-house . . . and to hear a lady confess a partiality for a man who perhaps she has not seen three times."

II

Those things which to a bridling dame from New England appeared to be coarse vulgarities, were no doubt to Franklin and his grey-haired cronies of the Church mere harmless gallantries with which elderly beaux whiled away the hours when in the company of an elderly flapper. That Madame Helvetius was coarser grained than Madame

[3] From the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, 1899.

Brillon there is no doubt; and that she was ill-educated and unversed in spelling is proved by her letters to Franklin, but that she had the ability to create an amiable atmosphere in which her guests enjoyed themselves is demonstrated by this letter from the Abbé Morellet to Franklin, written after the latter had returned to Philadelphia:

"I shall never forget the happiness I have enjoyed in knowing you and seeing you intimately. I write to you from Auteuil, seated in your arm chair, on which I have engraved *Benjamin Franklin hic sedebat*,[4] and having by my side the little bureau, which you bequeathed to me at parting with a drawerful of nails to gratify the love of nailing and hammering, which I possess in common with you. But, believe me, I have no need of all these helps to cherish your endeared remembrance and to love you."

After his return home, Madame Helvetius wrote to Franklin about the possibility of meeting one's spouse in heaven. She added: "But I believe that you, who have been a coquin [rogue], will be restored to more than one."

[4] Benjamin Franklin sat here.

Chapter XXXII

Franklin and the Countess d'Houdetot

I

A PURELY platonic, though fervent, admirer of Franklin was Sophie Lalive, Countess d'Houdetot, once the beloved of Jean Jacques Rousseau, and the friend and patron of St. John de Crèvecoeur, the French immigrant to the United States who became the author of *Letters of a Pennsylvania Farmer*. From the first she seems to have been an ardent sympathizer with the American cause, and when at the age of about fifty she met Franklin, she at once joined the circle of those ladies who wrote tender letters to the sage during his entire stay in France; and afterwards, too. She had a passion for planting trees as souvenirs at her home at Sanois, in the valley of Montmorency. She called them her "memorials." She once asked Thomas Jefferson to procure her more than twenty different trees from the United States, which she wanted for her garden. Her letters to Franklin were always expressed in worshipful terms, closing with such expressions as "A thousand tender sentiments to Monsieur Franklin." The following is a specimen:

"You have promised, my dear and venerable doctor, a little visit at Sanois. This is the moment to remind you of it; our path and my garden are in all their beauty and our flowers call you. If it is convenient to come Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, or some other day, remember that you have promised me to be entirely my guest and to dwell

DEBORAH READ FRANKLIN

WIFE OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

under my roof. You will find nowhere else one who will have greater pleasure in seeing you; it will be a memorial the more to embellish and honor my little country retreat, where I conserve with care the memory of all that has drawn my admiration and touched my heart. How much, my dear doctor, have you the right to these distinctions! . . ."

At another time she wrote:

"Permit me to press against my heart, with religious tenderness, the man of my age who appears to me most to merit the respect of the human race."

When Franklin visited Sanois in the spring of 1781, she gave an elaborate *fête champêtre* in his honor. She and her guests met him a half mile from the house and escorted him to the grounds, where, on alighting from his carriage, Franklin was made the center of a circle which recited a verse of welcome. Dinner was then served, to the accompaniment of music. As each glass of wine was poured, the Countess, her son and daughter-in-law, and the Counts Tressau and d'Apeché rose in turn and sang a laudatory verse. Afterwards Franklin was conducted to the garden where he was asked to plant an acacia tree from America. A near-by pillar was inscribed as follows:

"Sacred tree! the lasting monument
Of the visit to these scenes
A Wise Man deigned to pay;
Of these gardens henceforth the pride,
Receive, receive the just homage
Of our vows and of our incense.
And may'st thou, all down the ages,
Touched gently by the hand of time.
Last as long as his name, his laws, and his writings."

Soon after Franklin had returned home, she wrote the following letter in English to Thomas Jefferson, his successor at Paris:

"Sir: I am greatly indebted to you for your polite attention in sending me so early the news of our dear & venerable doctor's happy and safe arrival in his own country — He is become respectable to all nations & peculiarly dear to his own, as well as to his numerous friends and acquaintances. You have relieved me from a great load of uneasiness & afforded me at ye same time a most heartfelt joy — Your elegant account of ye reception he has meet with at Ph[la], has moved me even to tears.

"Antiquity itself does not afford a more pleasing spectacle. This happy event seems to justify a Superintending Providence, which has crowned virtue with a most valuable reward. I shall unite the homage I owe this Great man to that of the two Continents — His knowledge has been immensely useful to both & his virtue singularly so to his own."

The Countess d'Houdetot was one of the few women on whom an American city conferred its freedom. New Haven so honored her on May 10, 1785, along with nine other French "personages."

II

In the American Philosophical Society's great collection of Franklin manuscripts, containing no less than 13,800 pieces, there are many other delicate missives written to the venerable American envoy at Paris, all of them exhaling incense and adoration. Franklin, as we have seen, could not always resist the temptation to love his neighbor's wife as himself; this is a letter from Madame Le Roy, wife of his good friend, the scientist, showing that he had plenty of encouragement:

"You compliment me, my dear Papa, on my courage in having gone up in a balloon. Alas, it only served to make me regret that I could not go very far away in it, for if that vehicle could have transported me towards you, I would have remained near you and would have given you proofs of the consideration and esteem which you have ineffaceably engraved on my heart. . . . I assure you that as long as I have a breath of life I shall love you. I embrace you with all my heart."

Most of the tender notes in this collection are signed, but some are not. This is one of those not signed, apparently written as a New Year greeting:

"Receive, good papa, at the renewal of the year the vows which I have made for your happiness and for the conservation of your days, which are precious to all those persons who have the advantage of knowing you."

And this is signed by the Countess de Golofkin:

"I have a great desire, my dear and good papa, to see you, to embrace you, and to say two words. Let me know at what moment I can be sure of not interrupting you, and receive meanwhile the tender assurance of sentiments which I have vowed to you until the end of my life."

Lest this note be misunderstood, however, it should be added that further correspondence from the little Countess makes it plain that though she may have embraced the good doctor, she was meantime looking over his shoulder. Her real affections were centered on an adventurous Lovelace who had gone off to the wars in America, leaving her a prey to unspeakable terrors. At the news of every battle in America, she came flying down to Franklin. She was simply certain that her beloved had been killed; or at least horribly wounded. Would Franklin please find out at once and advise her?

Chapter XXXIII

Final Days in France

I

WITH all the honors and attentions showered upon him, the remainder of Franklin's stay in France might have passed like a happy dream, had it not been for the constant necessity of raising new funds and of attending to the complicated transactions connected with the outfitting of privateers and the shipping of supplies home.

"The storm of bills which I found coming upon us both," he wrote to John Jay, who was vainly begging money from Spain, "has terrified and vexed me to such a degree that I have been deprived of sleep, and so much indisposed by continual anxiety, as to be rendered almost incapable of writing"; and to Jonathan Williams he wrote: "I, in all these mercantile matters, am like a man walking in the dark. I stumble often, and frequently get my shins broke."

When it wanted money, Congress, with a fine, large disregard for detail, simply drew on Franklin, who meantime had to pay the interest on the French debt and the salaries of all the American agents in Europe. At length Robert Morris, financier of the war, wrote him that he simply must have 25,000,000 francs or go broke. Once more Franklin had to send a humble petition to the Count de Vergennes. The latter's reply was that the great expense under which France labored made such a loan impracticable; but that Louis XVI had resolved to grant the sum of six millions,

not as a loan, but as a free gift. It was this gift which enabled Washington to complete his plans for a triumphant end to the war.

Then comes another harassment. John Adams returns to France to conduct the negotiations for peace when Britain shall be ready. Adams, acting independently, at once takes it upon himself to assume charge of all the diplomatic correspondence with Versailles. This promptly gets on the nerves of the Count de Vergennes, and Franklin is kept busy making elaborate explanations. At last Adams, having taken to himself plenty of rope, hangs himself. On being informed that the Count Rochambeau has sailed for America at the head of a strong French fleet, Adams describes his high satisfaction. But a few days later he is moved to write another letter to the Count de Vergennes. He has noted that the king has decided to dispatch this fleet " without having been solicited by the Congress." Adams's pedantic mind cannot let this pass without correction, though it is a detail of no consequence; he points out to the Count that Congress *has* solicited naval assistance.

The Count replies testily. He informs Adams that in future he can treat only with Franklin, who alone has letters of credence to the king. He then asks Franklin to transmit the entire correspondence with Adams to Congress. The result is that Congress cautions Adams, who moves on to Holland.

For this incident Adams never forgave Franklin. Twenty years after the latter's death he wrote that Franklin had " concerted with de Vergennes to crush him." Adams spoke of it as a " vulgar and low intrigue," referring incidentally to Franklin's " extreme indolence and dissipation " and his " passion for women."

II

To amuse himself, between times, with his ancient love for newspaper hoaxes, and incidentally to have some sport with the enemy, Franklin writes and circulates three bogus documents. One is supposed to be a letter from the Count de Schaumberg to the Baron Hohendorf, commanding the Hessian troops hired to George III for service in America, reading in part as follows:

"I am about to send you some new recruits. Don't economize them. Remember glory before all things. Glory is true wealth. There is nothing degrades a soldier like the love of money. He must care only for honor and reputation, but this reputation must be acquired in the midst of dangers. A battle gained without costing the conquerer any blood is an inglorious success, while the conquered cover themselves with glory by perishing with their arms in their hands. Do you remember that of the 300 Lacedemonians who defended the defile of Thermopylae, not one returned? How happy should I be, could I say the same of my brave Hessians!"[1]

The second document is a supposed "Extract of a letter from Captain Gerrish, of the New England Militia." It appears in an imaginary supplement to the *Boston Independent Chronicle*. It describes the taking of booty from the Seneca Indians, among which were eight packages of scalps taken from American soldiers, farmers, women, boys, girls, and infants. Accompanying is an "invoice and explanation" from James Crauford, a trader, to the governor of Canada, with the request that the "peltry" be sent to the King of England. This horrifying hoax deceived not only the English, but the home folks. American news-

[1] Bigelow's Works of Franklin.

papers continued to reprint it as genuine for years afterward.

The third document was written over the signature of Commodore John Paul Jones, who repelled the stigma of pirate applied to him by Sir Joseph Yorke and named as the real pirate King George III.

III

In 1780 occurs the capture of Henry Laurens, envoy to Holland, by the British off Newfoundland. He is taken to the Tower of London, where he is imprisoned for fifteen months, while Franklin vainly attempts to have him exchanged for Gen. Burgoyne and to lighten the rigor of his imprisonment. Laurens is not released before Cornwallis surrenders at Yorktown, October 17, 1781.

When he heard the news of the surrender, Franklin, by now well past most human illusions, must have felt much as he did when he wrote this to Dr. Priestley:

"A young angel of distinction being sent down to this world on some business for the first time, had an old courier-spirit assigned him as a guide. They arrived over the seas of Martinico, in the middle of the long day of obstinate fight between the fleets of Rodney and De Grasse. When, through the clouds of smoke, he saw the fire of the guns, the decks covered with mangled limbs, and bodies dead or dying; the ships sinking, burning, or blown into the air; and the quantity of pain, misery, and destruction, the crews yet alive were thus with so much eagerness dealing round to one another he turned angrily to his guide and said, 'You blundering blockhead, you are ignorant of your business; you undertook to conduct me to the earth, and you have brought me into hell!' 'No, sir,' said the guide, 'I have made no mistake; this is really the earth, and these are

men. Devils never treat one another in this cruel manner; they have more sense, and more of what men (vainly) call humanity.' "

Also the Doctor repeated to the Bishop of St. Asaph his celebrated saying:

" There never was a good war, or a bad peace."

IV

It was about this time that Franklin attained the very height of his popularity in France. He was besieged by inventors who wished him to pass on their discoveries and by eccentric persons with " schemes " to unfold. He was consulted as an authority on everything from internal ailments to the principles of government. He received a correspondence in nine different languages. One day he got a curious letter, the first of a series from a writer who would sign himself only as " The Representative of the Author." The writer divulged that he had been investigating the properties of heat and light; he sent his papers and drawings to Franklin with this letter composed in an awkward English:

" Was it not so material a point to the Author that a candid judgment should be passed upon his work, he would trust to time alone. But he is certain that many a Accademical gentleman do not look with pleasure upon his discoveries and will do their utmost to prejudice the whole Body. Let the cabal be ever so warm, it certainly will be silenced by the sanction of such a man as Doctor Franklin, and how far a judgment passed by himself and the Royal Academy can influence public opinion is well known."

Franklin later learned that the writer was a certain French physician who had formerly lived in London. His name was Jean Paul Marat — " Friend of the People " in the

French Revolution and in 1793 stabbed to death, when seated in his bathtub shaped like a shoe, by Charlotte Corday.

Some time later another odd letter was received from a lawyer in the town of Arras. It was as follows:

"Monsieur: A judgment rendered by the èchévins of St. Omer, prohibiting the use of lightning rods, has afforded me the opportunity of pleading before the Council of Artois the cause of a sublime discovery for which mankind is indebted to you. The desire to aid in uprooting the prejudices opposed to its progress in our province led me to have printed the argument which I made in this case. I venture to hope, monsieur, that you will deign kindly to receive a copy of this work, the object of which was to induce my fellow citizens to accept one of your benefactions. I am happy to have been able to be of service to my province in determining its highest magistrates to receive this important discovery, happier still if I can add to this advantage the honor of securing the patronage of a man whose least merit is to be the most illustrious savant of the world. I have the honor to be with respect, monsieur,

"Your very humble and very obedient servant,

"De Robespierre,

"Advocate to the Council of Artois."

The precise little lawyer who thus sought Franklin's help in converting provincial Frenchmen to the use of lightning rods was the Maximilien de Robespierre who eleven years later was regarded as the incarnation of the Great Terror and who was destined to become, in 1794, one of its victims on the scaffold.

A third letter of an unexpected nature came from another famous figure — Turgot, once the right-hand minister of Louis XVI, but afterwards dismissed at the demand of

Marie Antoinette. Turgot asked Franklin to instruct him in an economical method of heating a house. Franklin responded by contriving for him a new type of stove called the "syphon" model.

A book would be required in which to relate all the curious activities of Franklin at this period. For example, he was asked to attend in 1783 one of Montgolfier's first balloon experiments in the garden of the queen's palace. A legend says that some scoffer remarked: "What is the use of a balloon?"

"What," replied Franklin, "is the use of a new-born baby?"

V

In 1782 began the negotiations for peace between the United States and Great Britain. In October Franklin wrote feelingly to John Adams: "*Blessed are the peacemakers*, is, I suppose, to be understood in the other world; for in this they are frequently *cursed*."

All of Franklin's diplomatic gifts were needed to maintain harmony between the negotiators, for transactions were conducted in an atmosphere of intense suspicion, and more than once John Adams and John Jay were on the verge of creating an ugly breach between the United States and France.[2] The French government was highly nervous for more than one reason, its finance minister, Necker, having already disclosed the appalling drain on its revenues, due partly to the cost of maintaining the horde of parasites clustering around the court at Versailles.

The business of concluding peace occupied two years and a quarter. Preliminary articles were signed in 1782, but the treaty with England was not ratified by Congress until January 14, 1784.

[2] "Mr. Jay likes Frenchmen as little as Mr. Lee and Mr. Izard did. He says they are not a moral people." — Works of John Adams.

Franklin seems to have allowed himself to be persuaded by Adams and Jay to sign the articles with England without consulting the French government. "I am at a loss, sir," wrote the Count de Vergennes, "to explain your conduct, and that of your colleagues on this occasion. You have concluded your preliminary articles without any communication between us, although the instructions from Congress prescribe that nothing shall be done without the participation of the king." The Count also wrote to the French minister in America: "If we may judge of the future from what has passed here under our eyes, we shall be but poorly paid for all that we have done for the United States, and for securing to them a national existence."

And it was at this very moment that Congress was asking, through Franklin, for a gigantic loan! Franklin was compelled to acknowledge that an "indiscretion" had been committed; but he assured the Count that, as regards the king, "no prince was ever more beloved and respected by his own subjects, than the king is by the people of the United States." He got, not the loan, but a free gift of six millions. It was one of the final nails driven into the coffin of the French monarchy by the monarchy itself.

VI

The year 1784 brought Franklin a little more leisure than he had enjoyed for several years, but not a great amount of peace. Gout attacked him more fiercely than ever, and a new ailment, the stone, frequently sent him to bed in severe pain; and there was little relaxation in the demands on his time and services.

In this year the king appointed him on a commission of nine to investigate the operations of Mesmer, whose appearance in Paris from Germany, whence he had fled, had

given tremendous circulation to two new terms, "mesmerism," and "animal magnetism." One of the members of this commission was Dr. Guillotin, whose name was afterwards applied to the bloody machine so freely used during the Revolution; not because he was the inventor of it, but because he was an advocate of more humane methods of capital punishment than hanging or shooting. Two other members — Lavoisier, the chemist, and Bailly, the historian of astronomy, the first president of the National Assembly, and the first mayor of Paris — were destined to die beneath this same machine. A fourth associate was Le Roy, one of the best of Franklin's French friends. Some of the experiments made during this investigation took place at Franklin's house at Passy. His was the first name signed to the report. It condemned mesmerism as a fraud. Mesmer decamped to England.

Other events of importance to Franklin occurred in this year. William Franklin, writing from London, asked for a renewal of relations with his father. Franklin sent William's son, Temple, over to "pay his duty," but discouraged William's offer to come to Passy. It is doubtful if he ever quite forgave William for joining the Tories.

Two incidents which Franklin doubtless enjoyed were his success in having John Carroll, his companion on the bitter trip to Canada, appointed as the first Catholic bishop in North America; and his circumvention of the Church of England in refusing ordination to two young Episcopal priests from America. "If the English won't have you," said Franklin, "try the Scotch." The scheme worked, Samuel Seabury, of Connecticut, being the first American to receive consecration at the hands of three Scottish bishops.

He probably also enjoyed writing this oft-quoted letter to Benjamin Webb, an American stranded in France who had appealed to Franklin for help:

"I send you herewith a bill for ten louis d'ors. I do not pretend to give such a sum. I only *lend* it to you. When you shall return to your country with a good character, you cannot fail of getting into business that will in time enable you to pay all your debts. In that case, when you meet with another honest man in similar distress, you must pay me by lending this sum to him; enjoining him to discharge the debt by a like operation, when he shall be able and shall meet with such another opportunity. I hope it may thus go through many hands before it meets with a knave that will stop its progress. This is a trick of mine for doing a deal of good with a little money. I am not rich enough to afford *much* in good works, and so am obliged to be cunning and to make the most of a *little*."

Franklin had already done the same favor three years previously, on the same terms, for one William Nixon, and had enjoined him similarly, closing his letter as follows:

"Let kind offices go round. Mankind are all of a family."

In August, 1784, Thomas Jefferson arrived in Paris to assist Franklin and Adams in completing commercial treaties. He wrote home that "there appeared to me more respect and veneration attached to the character of Dr. Franklin in France, than to that of any other person in the same country, foreign or native."

Franklin, who had several times asked that he be permitted to return home, now renewed his request. Congress, on March 7, 1785, granted the permission, and appointed Thomas Jefferson as plenipotentiary in his stead. Jefferson's remark, at his first meeting with the Count de Vergennes, is historic.

"It is you, monsieur," said the Count, "who replaces Dr. Franklin?"

"I am only his successor, sir; no one can replace him."

Jefferson and Franklin had ever been good friends. In certain traits and beliefs they were markedly similar. In political and economic theory they upheld a kind of democratic individualism, as against John Adams and Alexander Hamilton, who believed that government should be in the exclusive hands of the wealthy and well-born. It was because they differed in principle and viewpoint that Adams and Franklin so often clashed personally.

Franklin was too feeble to go to Versailles to take his leave, but the king bestowed on him a parting gift of his portrait, circled twice with 408 diamonds. Men came to embrace him and young women to kiss him for the last time. The queen's litter was provided to bear him to Havre. On July 12, 1785, he left Passy, which named a street after him, accompanied by his friends Le Veillard, de Chaumont, Mlle. de Chaumont, and his two grandsons. The party proceeded by easy stages, being entertained all the way. They spent three days accepting hospitalities at Havre. When Franklin reached Southampton, the British government graciously exempted his baggage from the usual examination. He was greeted there by William Franklin and by the loyal and affectionate Bishop of St. Asaph and his daughter Catherine.

"We are forever talking of our good friends," wrote the latter in a farewell note. "Something is perpetually occurring to remind us of the time spent with you. We never walk in the garden without seeing Dr. Franklin's room and thinking of the work that was begun in it."

Franklin's ship turned her bow homeward on July 28, 1785. He had been in France nine years. He was 78 years old. He wrote back to Madame Lavoisier that he did not "forget Paris, and the nine years' happiness I enjoyed there in the sweet society of a people whose conversa-

tion is instructive, whose manners are highly pleasing, and who, above all the nations of the world, have, in the greatest perfection, the art of making themselves beloved of strangers, and now, even in my sleep, I find that the scenes of all my pleasant dreams are laid in that city or in its neighborhood."

During the voyage Franklin spent most of his time in his cabin, writing. A stranger might have thought he was busy with his memoirs of a country seen in its brilliant decay, or reminiscences of its great men and fascinating women. But when he emerged from his labors he was bearing a paper entitled " The Cause and Cure of Smoky Chimneys."

Chapter XXXIV

"Home Is the Sailor"

I

WHEN Franklin lands in Philadelphia it is at that Market Street wharf from which more than sixty years before he first surveyed the quaint little town. Throngs are waiting for a sight of him, for those persons who are adults now were children when he departed for France; they greet him with tumultuous hurrahs, cannonades and cheers that follow him to his door. The Pennsylvania Assembly and Gen. Washington send him congratulatory letters. He finds Sarah Bache and her seven children well, and writes in his diary: "God be praised and thanked for all his mercies!"

No sooner is he made comfortable than his fellow citizens resume their ancient habit of electing him to office. "They have eaten my flesh," he resignedly writes to a friend, "and seem resolved to pick my bones." He receives a seat on the Philadelphia Common Council and is promptly made its chairman. He is next elected president of the Supreme Executive Council of the State, or, as we would call it today, governor.

His political duties, however, are at first not exacting, and he finds time to add a wing to his house and to turn his garden into a lawn on which he can sit under the mulberry tree and play games with his grandchildren. He also invents a contrivance for reaching the books on the high shelves of his library and a chair which can be unfolded into

HIGH STREET (NOW MARKET STREET), PHILADELPHIA, IN FRANKLIN'S TIME AS RECONSTRUCTED AT THE SESQUICENTENNIAL EXHIBITION

a step-ladder. At intervals he tries to work on his uncompleted "Autobiography." He strangely rejects an appeal from "crazy John Fitch" for help in his project for running vessels by steam out of the port of Philadelphia, where Robert Fulton is a miniature painter; but takes up the cudgels in behalf of religion against an unknown correspondent, believed to have been Thomas Paine.

"Think," he writes, "how great a portion of mankind consists of weak and ignorant men and women, and of inexperienced, inconsiderate youth of both sexes, who have need of the motives of religion to restrain them from vice, to support their virtue, and to retain them in the practice of it till it becomes *habitual*, which is the great point for its security."

He assists the founding of a college for young Germans at Lancaster, being accompanied there by Hector St. John, formerly St. John de Crèvecoeur, who was, as has been noted, the protégé of the Countess d'Houdetot; he writes several papers, among them the *Retort Courteous* and *Sending Felons to America*, both aimed at Great Britain; he attends the meetings in his house of the American Philosophical Society, the Abolition Society, and the Society for Political Education. He has in mind another society, of which he writes to Dupont de Nemours, the French Encyclopedist, who became one of the ancestors of the American powder-making family of the same name, as follows:

"Would to God I could take with me Messrs. Dupont, Dubourg, and some other French friends, with their good ladies! I might then, by mixing them with my friends in Philadelphia, form a happy society that would prevent my ever wishing again to visit Europe."

Visitors, both from home and abroad, begin to pour upon him, and soon he writes impatiently to Le Veillard in France:

"My time is so cut to pieces by friends and strangers, that I have sometimes envied the prisoners in Bastille."

This is the first indication that Franklin is aware of what has been going on in France since his departure. This letter was written in 1788. The Parisians overran and emptied the Bastille on July 14, 1789, four months after the election of George Washington as first President of the United States.

But meantime there has been pleasanter news from France. Temple Franklin writes his grandfather from Rancocas farm: "All the family (the Chaumonts) send their love to you, and the beautiful Mme. Foucault accompanys hers with an English kiss"; to which our old *galant* rouses himself to reply: "Thanks to Mad. Foucault for her kindness in sending me the kiss. It has grown cold by the way. I hope for a warm one when we meet." Also the Abbé Morellet writes directly to say: "I cannot express to you the pleasure, the transport which I felt at the news of your arrival at Philadelphia, which a friend of Mr. Jefferson has brought me. . . . May your days be prolonged and be free from pain; may your friends long taste the sweetness and charm of your society, and may those whom the seas have separated from you be still happy in the thought that the end of your career will be, as our good La Fontaine says, 'the evening of a fine day.'"

The Abbé also wrote of the arrival of Thomas Paine in France, whither he went, provided with an abundance of introductory letters by Franklin, to sell his newly invented bridge. Among Paine's hostesses in France was Madame Helvetius.

II

In the same year, 1787, the Constitutional Convention assembled in Philadelphia, and Franklin was soon taking an active part in its proceedings. He vainly tried to induce the Convention to accept two of his pet ideas: one was that the nation's President should serve without salary; and the other was that the more important and populous States should have a larger representation in the national legislature than the smaller.

One day he surprised those who had always regarded him as a free-thinker by proposing that prayers should be held every morning before the Convention began business. "The longer I live," said he, "the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: That God governs in the affairs of men." But the delegates were cold; only three of four supported Franklin's plea, and the assembly adjourned without voting on it.

Franklin was now too old and ailing to speak from the floor. He therefore put his arguments into written speeches which were read aloud by his colleague, James Wilson. He urged that Congress should consist of only one House, but when the two-chamber system was adopted, it was his suggestion that in the Senate every State should have equal representation but in the House each State should be represented in proportion to its population. He also proposed that the House should have the exclusive right to originate money bills. He, strangely enough, supported the measure giving the President authority to suspend the laws for certain periods, but vigorously fought the proposal to give votes to property holders exclusively. Madison wrote that "Dr. Franklin expressed his dislike to everything that tended to debase the spirit of the common people," saying, "some of the greatest rogues he was ever acquainted with

were the richest rogues." Franklin favored giving Congress the power to impeach the President, and opposed the President's having the right of absolute veto. He supported the measure dealing with treason, which required that it be an overt act witnessed by at least two persons.

When the time came to vote on the adoption of the Constitution, Franklin admitted he was dissatisfied with it, but urged that it be accepted as the best that fallible men could produce. He could not say that even his own objections to it were well founded, and told the story of the French lady who, in a dispute with a sister, said:

"I don't know how it happens, sister, but I meet with nobody except myself that is always in the right."

III

In the same year Franklin was elected governor of Pennsylvania for the third time; he sighed a little but admitted his gratification.

"I seem to have intruded myself into the company of posterity," he said, "when I ought to have been abed and asleep."

In this, his 82nd year, his infirmities were intensified by a fall down the stone steps of his garden. His sufferings from the stone increased, and he began to prepare for death. He rallied, however, and was soon entertaining visitors with his accustomed verve. When J. P. Brissot, deputy for Paris in the French National Assembly and a leader of the Girondins, visited him in 1788, he wrote: "Thanks to God, Franklin still exists! . . . I have just been to see him and enjoy his conversation in the midst of his books, which he still calls his best friends. The pains of his cruel infirmity change not the serenity of his countenance, nor the calmness of his conversation." Brissot, like so many others

among Franklin's friends, soon afterwards died beneath the blade of "Sainte Guillotine."

It was the next year that the "anvil," as Thomas Jefferson expressed it, began to use violence against the hammer in France, and there came a letter from Madame Brillon, saying:

"We are at a critical stage, wherein evil at its apex ought to (or at least it behooves us to hope so) usher in the good; if the new order of things which is proposed becomes a reality, your unsullied prayers (since those of the just alone are pleasing to the Supreme Being) will be most needful to us. Pray for us, my good papa. You love France, the French people; be our saint and if these messieurs did but resemble you I would become their faithful follower. I am yours, my dear papa; I revere you, honor you, love you; not a day passes that my heart does not draw near you in thought at least; not one wherein I fail to recall your friendship, so precious to me that nothing can ever rob me of it, and the memory of the days when I enjoyed it more closely, more intimately, makes one of the shining spots of happiness in my life."

Franklin seems not to have made much comment on the progress of the French Revolution; he was perhaps too old, too preoccupied with home affairs, to have grasped its full import. It is doubtful if, before he left France, he realized the nearness of its approach. Jefferson was able to roam about the country and see the condition of the people in the scantiness of the peasant's soup-pot and the hardness of his bed, but Franklin was grown too gouty and heavy for such ramblings.

In 1789 he diverted himself by writing several papers. One was his protest against the over-much teaching of Latin and Greek in schools and colleges. "The best master of

languages," he used to say to his intimates, "is a mistress." Having by this time joined the fight against slavery, he also wrote his "Plea for improving the Condition of Free Blacks"; "An Address to the Public from the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting Abolition of Slavery"; and "An Account of the Supremest Court of Judicature in Pennsylvania, namely, the Court of the Press."

His pieces against slavery were followed by one of his most famous newspaper contributions. It was a supposed speech by Sidi Mehemet Ibrahim, "a member of the Divan of Algiers," given in a bogus historical work called "Martin's Account of his Consulship," and was described as against the petition of a sect "who prayed for the abolition of piracy and slavery as being unjust."

He also wrote one of his spirited, gossipy letters to Noah Webster, who gave his name to the spelling book and the dictionary on which generations of his countrymen have been reared, concerning the integrity of words.

In the spring of 1790 gout, stone, and a general breakdown forced him to his bed, but at intervals he was able to see friends. Jefferson visited him and found him cheerful but much emaciated. Franklin listened with close attention to Jefferson's account of what he had seen of the French Revolution. "I observed," wrote Jefferson, "his face often flushed." Gen. Washington also came to see him and was shown a new washing mangle, Franklin's latest invention.

Mary Hewson, the former Polly Stevenson, who had spent the winter of 1784–1785 with Franklin at Passy, had meantime arrived in Philadelphia to be with him during his last days. She left the following account:

"When the pain was not too violent to be amused, he employed himself with his books, his pen, or in conversation with his friends, and upon every occasion displayed the

clearness of his intellect, and the cheerfulness of his temper. Even when the intervals from pain were so short that his words were frequently interrupted, I have known him to hold a discourse in a sublime strain of piety. I shall never forget one day that I passed with our friend last summer (1789). I found him in bed in great agony; but when that agony abated a little, I asked him if I should read to him. He said yes, and the first book I met with was Johnson's Lives of the Poets. I read the life of Watts, who was a favorite author with Dr. Franklin; and instead of lulling him to sleep, it roused him to a display of the powers of his memory and his reason. He repeated several of Watts' Lyric Poems and descanted upon their sublimity in a strain worthy of them and their pious author."

About April 1 pleurisy, which had once almost slain him during his boyhood, appeared in his lungs and he became feverish. An abscess developed and he was able to rest only by the aid of laudanum. On the 8th he wrote a letter to Jefferson about the northwestern boundary of the United States. It was in his characteristically clear style. On the 12th he got up so that his bed might be made. When someone remarked that he was going to get well, he answered, "I hope not."

When he had resumed his bed, his breathing became difficult. Finally the abscess in his lungs burst and he gradually sank. April 17 found him unconscious. At 11 o'clock that night, while he lay as if sleeping quietly, a shudder passed through the great frame, and he ceased to breathe.

In Philadelphia the procession to the old Christ Church burial ground was the greatest ever seen in that city. Congress, which had not yet acted on his claims for services and for moneys expended, adopted a badge of mourning for one month. In France Mirabeau, then vainly trying to mod-

erate the revolutionary tempest, delivered before the National Assembly his oft-quoted speech beginning:

"Franklin is dead! The genius that freed America and poured a flood of light over Europe has returned to the bosom of the Divinity." From the entire civilized world came the echo: "Franklin is dead!"

Chapter XXXV

Franklin's Will

I

FRANKLIN left an estate estimated at $150,000, in those days a considerable fortune. He owned various houses and lots in Philadelphia and Boston, and tracts of land in Nova Scotia, Georgia, and Ohio. He also held bonds, bank shares, and about $25,000 in cash or quick securities.

His will, dated July 17, 1788, disposed of all his property and remembered all his relatives and closest friends with great exactness. He even marked the catalogue showing how his books were to be disposed of. His old business debts he bequeathed to the Pennsylvania Hospital, which would have preferred something relatively easy to handle, like a wounded bear.

A codicil bequeathed his crab-tree walking stick, "with a gold head curiously wrought in the form of the cap of liberty," given to him by Madame de Forbach, Dowager Duchess of Deux Ponts, to Gen. Washington.

The most curious feature of this codicil, and the one which has caused the most dissension since, was the bequest to the town of Boston and the corporation of Philadelphia of 1000 pounds sterling ($5000) each, "to let out the same upon interest at five per cent. per annum to such young married artificers, under the age of twenty-five years, as have served an apprenticeship in the said town, and faithfully fulfilled the duties required in their indentures, so as

to obtain a good moral character from at least two respectable citizens, who are willing to become their sureties, in a bond with the applicants, for the repayment of the moneys so lent, with interest." Loans were not to exceed 60 pounds or be less than 15 pounds, and each borrower was required to pay back, with the yearly interest, one tenth of the principal.

Franklin calculated that the total sum in 100 years would amount to 131,000 pounds for each city. Of this sum the managers were to lay out 100,000 pounds in public works of general utility to the inhabitants. The remaining 31,000 pounds were to be let out in loans as directed for another hundred years, when Franklin calculated that the sum would have grown to 4,661,000 pounds.

Not even Franklin's wisdom, however, was able to foresee the rapid changes in conditions that would ensue during the next century, or to provide for contingencies. The first hundred years under the terms of the will terminated in Boston in 1891, but instead of there being the $655,000 which Franklin counted on, there was actually only $391,-168.68 in the fund. Philadelphia made an even worse showing; there the fund contained less than $100,000. In both cases the funds were tied up for a time by unsuccessful suits brought by the descendants of Franklin. In Philadelphia it was charged that the fund had been partly used for purposes which would not have been approved by its founder, while in Boston there was in its early years evidence of careless administration.

One hundred years is a long time and Franklin is not the first will-maker who has failed to anticipate inevitable and far-reaching changes, or to leave money in such a way that trouble will not ensue.

Only seven years after Franklin's death, the Pennsylvania Hospital asked that it be permitted to return its legacy,

having found the debts due Franklin either small, too old, or in other respects uncollectable.

II

Of Franklin's descendants not one is left bearing his own name. William, the only survivor of his two sons, died in England, in 1813, at the age of 82.

William Temple Franklin, his grandson, died in Paris in 1823 and was buried in Père La Chaise Cemetery, where guides earn extra francs from American tourists by pointing out his grave.

Sarah Franklin survived her father eighteen years and was buried beside him. Her numerous male descendants became professional or army and navy men. One of them, Richard Bache, 2nd, a lawyer, became a member of the Texas Senate, where he was the only member casting an adverse vote against union with the United States.

Franklin, however, needed no descendants to keep his name alive. He engraved it so deeply into the history of his time as to be ineffaceable. And this he did, not by industry, frugality, or the other virtues which he so sedulously preached, but by drawing men to him through his gift of being intensely alive, incessantly observant, immensely charitable, and unalterably radiant in the infectious cheer of his disposition.

Conclusion and Some of the Books Consulted

The eighteenth century, to which Franklin belonged, has been dealt with in the preceding pages. The nineteenth was an age of avid commercial exploitation. The twentieth century, the inheritor of its fathers' sins, will perhaps be referred to by future historians as the era in which, all the once empty and remote spaces of the earth having been explored or at least visited, even to the North Pole itself, men sickened of externalities and began to explore themselves.

Human nature still remains the dark zone which, like all unknown lands, is believed to be peopled with nameless things. This is because the light has penetrated so little beyond its edges that its recesses, its mountains, and inhabitants cannot yet be seen in their true proportions. However, some advances have been made. Messrs. Freud, Jung, and other leaders in psychological exploration have brought their lanterns to bear, and have dragged out of shadowed or buried caves certain presences which were once believed to be monsters, but which, examined and handled without fear or passion, are found to be in essence harmless, and which, if not beaten or screamed at, are even useful.

Biography of the past concerned itself with little beyond the external man. But such writing no longer satisfies. Men now wish to know themselves and their neighbors. They are even ready to know a worshipped hero, particularly if dead.

When the author began to study the life of Benjamin Franklin, he believed there was an inner Franklin the springs of whose actions could be uncovered. His search was only partly successful, and he is now convinced that either there was no inner Franklin, or that the outer Franklin so successfully covered and shielded the inner man by a host of external activities that any attempt to penetrate more than an ell below the surface of his life is and must be baffled.

It is possible that certain men possess no elements which are not translucent. Franklin's friend, Dr. Joseph Priestley, seems to have been one. His life has been described as "clear as crystal." Franklin was an admirer of simple, crystal people, and he gathered many such around him. Since he so easily took on the color of his associates, it may be that he finally succeeded in removing from himself whatever was cloudy and hidden and became, like them, translucent.

Either that was the case, or he was one of the most successful self-hiders who ever wrote an autobiography. Certain it is that about particular phases

of his being and career he preserved an impenetrable silence. Though he was one of the most voluminous of notemakers, one of the most public of men, and one of the most candid of correspondents, there is not a word in his mountain-high writings, for example, about the mother of his son William, or about the birth of his fondly-regarded grandson, William Temple Franklin; nothing about the circumstances of his marriage to Deborah Read; no explanation of his readiness to remain away from his home for long periods of years; nothing, after his youth, about the doubts, moods, wrestlings, and despairs that beset the adult man no less than the adolescent. He carried with him to his grave those things which he deemed to be personal and private and there we must respectfully leave them.

In writing this book, the author's chief reliance was, of course, Franklin's own story, the much-published *Autobiography*. It does its subject much injustice. It makes Franklin out to be no better than a tradesman, a trapper of shillings, with a taste for experimental hobbies and a weakness for shrewd politics. It is also incomplete, covering little more than half his life, and that not the most interesting or important. However, by discounting it and distrusting it, this author was occasionally able to read between its clear, its suspiciously clear, lines.

For the rest the author relied upon Prof. A. H. Smyth's *The Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, filling ten huge volumes; Mr. John Bigelow's *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin*, a title that assumes too much, for many new documents have been discovered since its day; *The Works of Franklin*, by Prof. Jared Sparks, who lived in an age when a spade was often not called even a digging implement but was simply ignored by the truly genteel: *Benjamin Franklin Self-Revealed*, by William Cabell Bruce, which reveals almost as much of the self of Senator Bruce as it does of Franklin's; *The Many-Sided Franklin*, by Paul Leicester Ford, which is light and gossipy and detailed; *The True Benjamin Franklin*, by Mr. Sydney George Fisher; and *Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters*, by Prof. John Bach McMaster.

The author also consulted many other lives and books belonging to the enormous bibliography of Franklin, but since most of their authors seemed to have the intention of either delivering a eulogy or proving a case, he sees no point in devoting several pages to a mere list of their titles.

For the facts and dates relating to Franklin's career, he drew largely upon Mr. James Parton's *Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin*. This work in two fat volumes sins perhaps both by omission and commission, but is sturdily written by an honest-appearing man.

The long list of books consulted regarding the men, women, and manners of the eighteenth century; the history and progress of scientific experiment; the rise and development of philosophic and religious thought; histories and accounts of the American Revolution and the French Revolution;

studies of government, politics, economics, diplomacy and wars, would be unfair to cite, since it would almost certainly omit some work that deserved inclusion.

A book, like an invention, is the work of no one man, but is the fruit of the combined work of many persons, many of them famous but more of them obscure, although just as important.

The Franklin material, when once gathered, was so vast that the author's task necessarily became severely selective. If he was to confine his book to a size which could be conveniently read and handled, he could not wander far into by-paths, however inviting, or into discussions, however useful, which might halt the flow of his narrative. His subject was Franklin, if possible the whole Franklin, and nothing but Franklin. He therefore abridged or telescoped his account of those events which have already been dealt with at length in general histories or specific treatises.

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P. R.

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